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# THE APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY

BY

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## PREFACE

When I began to teach philosophy at Oxford it seemed at least antecedently likely that I, who had but lately emerged from the Examination Schools, should be in a better position than those of more years and learning to appreciate the difficulties and problems which trouble beginners in those Final Honour Schools wherein the study of philosophy is included. This was my reason for presuming to lecture on 'An Introduction to Philosophy', and this is again my reason for amplifying and expanding those lectures into this book. My object is now, as it was then, to raise as many of the major problems of philosophy as limits of time and space allow, not with the promise, or even the hope, of providing a solution, but rather in the manner of an elder brother who gives to his junior the benefit of such experience as he himself has lately had. I hope that this modest aim will be remembered by those who might be inclined to regard this book as an attempt on my part to make a personal contribution, however trifling, towards the solution of the problems that vex mankind. I have no such intention in mind; very little, and that the least valuable part, of what I have to say is original, but I trust that a rapid and concise review of the territory of philosophy will not be without value to beginners in that study at the Universities and, perhaps, to others who are not ashamed to exercise now and then the faculty of thinking with which they have been endowed. I have not hesitated to make the manner and the matter as elementary as possible, for I am convinced that to take previous knowledge, however slight, for granted is more

dangerous than to run the risk of mis-statement or statement of half-truths in the attempt to achieve the highest degree of simplicity that the nature of the enquiry will allow. It is not possible to avoid technical language in talking of philosophy, any more than it is in talking of cricket or the Stock Exchange ; nor indeed does it seem very sensible to discard, in the hope of producing a Philosophy without Tears, a vocabulary which has been hammered out by the labour of centuries. But I have tried, as far as possible, to introduce the necessary technical terms in contexts where their meaning is plain. In short, I have tried to provide an introduction to Philosophy ; to those who are already acquainted with the goddess my services are superfluous.

For a book as derivative as this plainly confesses itself to be it is impossible to give either a complete bibliography or a complete list of acknowledgments and obligations. As for the former, the student can find no substitute for a first-hand acquaintance with the actual writings of the admitted masters throughout the ages. As for the latter, I can only express my profound indebtedness to all who, through the written or the spoken word, have guided my steps in these dangerous and delightful paths, asking their pardon if I have strayed from the way on which their sound doctrine directed me and praying them still to enlighten with their teaching my endeavours to reach that Celestial City where Beauty, Truth and Goodness, throned in eternal glory, await us all. I would offer more particular thanks to Mr. M. D. Van Oss and to my tutor, colleague, critic and friend, Mr. T. D. Weldon, Fellow of Magdalen, who have read the whole of the book in typescript and tried, with their careful examination and generous advice, to make it more coherent and more intelligible. Mr. H. M. D. Parker, Fellow of Magdalen, has very kindly assisted me in the laborious task of reading proofs.

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## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

							Born	Died
							B.C.	
PLATO . . . . . . .							428	348
ARISTOTLE . . . . . . .							384	322
								A.D.
DESCARTES . . . . . . .							1596	1650
GEULINCX . . . . . . .							1623	1669
SPINOZA . . . . . . .							1632	1677
LOCKE . . . . . . .							1632	1704
LEIBNIZ . . . . . . .							1646	1716
MALEBRANCHE . . . . . . .							1648	1715
BERKELEY . . . . . . .							1685	1753
HUME . . . . . . .							1711	1776
KANT . . . . . . .							1724	1804
HEGEL . . . . . . .							1770	1831
MILL . . . . . . .							1806	1873
SPENCER . . . . . . .							1820	1903
BRADLEY . . . . . . .							1846	1924

aesthetic activities are generically concerned with feelings which are from their very nature incapable of conceptual expression. It is the duty of philosophy to show that it is, by contrast with science, concrete and categorical, and, by contrast with art and religion, conceptual.

To do this it must begin by finding one concrete categorical fact, expressible in conceptual form. Unless it can do this it will be unable to distinguish itself from other human activities, or to examine critically the foundations, whether of hypothesis or of feeling, which those activities lay for themselves. If it can do so, it will be on the way to producing something more valuable than criticism, a firmly-based structure of categorical fact, for the philosopher is entitled to use in his building the same kind of construction as the scientist in his. The differences will be in their respective starting-places : but once these are established there is no reason to suppose, antecedently, that the categorical fact of the philosopher will be less fertile of consequences than the hypothesis of the scientist.

It is a bold claim, and one that may be difficult to substantiate. But the attempt to substantiate it must be made unless philosophy is to be regarded as one science or one feeling among many.

*Consult further :*

Plato. ‘ Republic ’ (trans. Davies and Vaughan), esp. Bks. II,  
III, VI, VII.

A. N. Whitehead. ‘ Science and the Modern World.’

B. Bosanquet. ‘ Science and Philosophy.’

## CHAPTER II

### THE FOUNDATION

#### i. *Cogito ergo sum*

Our ambition is to find a fact which will be different in kind both from the diagram of the scientist and from the metaphor of the poet, something, anything, which is beyond the hypotheses of the one, and not, like the feelings of the other, incapable of being fully and unmistakably expressed in words. It may be denied that any such fact is discoverable, that any such categorical certainty exists ; that if the scientist is not in contact with concrete reality when he is using test-tubes or the mystic not face to face with reality in his vision of God, then the task of the philosopher, whose language is vague and vain, is indeed a hopeless one. But we have seen the difficulty which attends the assertion that anybody else is in this immediate contact with the real which the philosopher desires ; and we can but try. We can never know that an attempt is hopeless until we have tried and failed : and when we have tried and failed we have not proved its impossibility. So, in spite of a quite natural scepticism, child, perhaps, of prejudice and indolence, we must see what we can do towards establishing one fact of which we can be absolutely certain.

And in this we can do no better than follow in the path trodden by two of the greatest of European thinkers, the one an Englishman and the other a Frenchman. The Englishman, John Locke, is famous among philosophers for his common-sense and matter-of-fact attitude to philosophical problems, and his consequent distrust

of ingenious systems and paradoxical solutions ; his qualities are thoroughness, clearness and sobriety rather than high-flying genius. He wrote his ‘Essay concerning Human Understanding’ to make clear to himself and to a few friends the nature and extent of the knowledge which the human mind can claim to have about itself, God and the physical world ; that is his problem, and on that goal all the different parts of the work converge. He is trying to describe rather than to discover, to take the facts as he finds them and write them down, rather than to enter into metaphysical controversy. In some respects this is our own endeavour, to find out what we know and how we can know it, though for our present purposes we have restricted the search to that for one piece of knowledge which we can assert to be unconditionally true.

When Locke, in the Fourth Book of the ‘Essay’, comes to treat of knowledge and opinion, he first deals with that knowledge of abstract ideas which we have when we are considering universal rather than particular propositions. He then comes, in the ninth chapter of that Book, to treat of the more interesting knowledge of his own existence as a perceiving being. This would seem, even to the legendary Man-in-the-street whom Locke philosophically represents, to be knowledge which cannot be denied, knowledge which is totally and categorically certain. Nobody can deny his own existence ; that he himself does not exist, whatever his views about God or physical things may be, is inconceivable. Everybody who is not a philosopher admits, indeed asserts, this knowledge without question ; and even the philosopher, try as he will, is unable to deny it. Here is one piece of knowledge which is quite indubitable, each man’s knowledge that he exists. It never occurs to anybody to doubt that he exists, unless he is adopting a philosophical pose, and when he has so posed he still cannot really doubt his own existence.

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So far the plain man. But if we persist, and press Locke further, we may not be satisfied. It is not quite convincing to say that we *cannot* doubt our own existence, for, clearly, we have just been considering the possibility of doing so, and there seems to be no catastrophic consequence involved in this process. If we can discuss the possibility of doubting our own existence we can at least understand what we mean by that doubting, and although that fact may not prove that we actually are doubting it does prove that the act of doubting is not inconceivable or self-contradictory ; to talk about doubting our own existence is not nonsense, it does mean something. If we ask Locke what grounds we have for asserting that we possess this knowledge of our own existence, he answers,<sup>1</sup> ‘ We perceive it so plainly and so certainly that it neither needs nor is capable of any proof. . . . We have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence, and an internal infallible perception that we are.’ That is the common sense of the plain man. But we shall be unwilling to base the whole of our constructive philosophy on an assertion which is not capable of proof, unless we can find nothing better. It is hardly enough to say to an obstinate objector, ‘ It is no good asking me for proof of this statement, that I exist ; there can be no proof of it : but no proof is needed, for I have an infallible internal perception that I am.’ He would be quite entitled to say, ‘ Then I envy you ; I have not,’ and turn away in disgust. Or, being more friendly, he would be quite justified in saying, ‘ Yes, but that is exactly what you have said the scientist does ; and you claim to do something different. The scientist founds his whole structure on something which you have called a hypothesis, which neither demands nor is capable of proof by him ; you claimed to have some other starting-point, different in kind from that, and now you are asking us to accept a situation precisely similar to his. Besides,

<sup>1</sup> ‘ Essay ’, Bk. iv, c. ix, § 3.

I mistrust these intuitions ; I suspect that they mean no more than unexamined prejudice.'

For our answer to this attack we must go further back, in time and in thought, following up a clue provided by Locke himself in that same chapter, but left by him unused : we must turn to the Frenchman, René Descartes.

Descartes set out on his philosophic quest with precisely our own aim and in face of precisely our own difficulties : he set out to discover one fact which it was impossible to doubt. He eliminated from his world, as we must eliminate, everything which he could doubt without involving himself and his thought in self-contradiction. And if the attempt is seriously made, as it was by him, it is surprising how much can be eliminated in this way. Let us take any ordinary situation and try to discover exactly what there is in it which can be thought not to be there without rendering thought impossible or self-contradictory. The particular time in which we are can be thought away ; there is nothing self-contradictory in thinking that at the present moment it is five o'clock in the morning ; as a matter of fact in New York it is. The particular place in space in which we now are can be thought away ; there is nothing self-contradictory in supposing, difficult though the supposition may be, that we are in Cambridge. We do in fact annihilate space and time whenever we remember something that happened to us or anticipate something that we expect to happen to us in a different time and space from those which we do here and now occupy. Whether, in remembering and anticipating, we do, so to speak, move ourselves backwards and forwards in time and put our present selves into past or future situations, or whether we bring those situations from their proper time and space into our here and now makes no difference to the fact that we can at will eliminate from our present situation its particular time and its particular space. We can do the same with our physical surroundings ; we can conceive of these

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walls as not here, this table as not here, even of each other's bodies as not here. The two things most difficult to think away are our own bodies and other people's minds ; but these are difficult to deal with only because they are more intimately connected with ourselves than are any other features of our world, and both of them will vanish if we doubt sufficiently strongly. It is possible to conceive of ourselves without bodies ; or if it is not then we are compelled to assert that when our bodies die we die. And it is possible, accordingly, to doubt the existence of other people's minds. For the existence of other people's minds, it should be remembered, is a thing of which we can have no direct experience ; it is inferred by our minds from the way in which their bodies behave. We see other people's bodies move and we infer that these movements are controlled by the same kind of mind which we know to govern similar movements of our own bodies ; so that if we can think away their bodies we have no evidence on which to base our inference of the existence of their minds. Our list could be indefinitely lengthened ; we have seen the possibility of doubting the existence of at least particular times and particular spaces, of physical things and inferred minds. These are among the most difficult to dispose of, and anything else, be it God, freedom or immortality, will present no difficulty to the really determined doubter. It should be remembered that we are not necessarily denying the existence of these things whose existence we are doubting : to doubt and to deny are by no means the same thing. We are simply trying to eliminate, in our search for one certain fact, everything that is not absolutely fundamental. We may find that many of the things we have doubted will be restored ; but they will be restored not on their own merits but, if at all, because they follow necessarily from the nature of the one fundamental fact which we shall establish.

And that one fact is, according to Descartes, the

doubter's own consciousness. The one fact that I cannot deny without hopeless self-contradiction, without not only sterilizing thought but utterly destroying it, is my own consciousness, my own mental activity. Whatever I am doing, hoping, willing, moving, thinking, doubting, or anything else, I am necessarily doing that something or thinking that something consciously. It is very important that the right meaning of consciousness in Descartes' statement should be recognized, and distinguished from one possible meaning of 'self-consciousness'. 'Self-consciousness' may mean one of two things. It may mean the recognition by the self of its own difference and distinction from something which is recognized as not-self, or other than self; and this meaning, as we shall see, Descartes welcomes and endorses. Or it may mean the observation by the self of the self as doing something; and this latter meaning involves several difficulties. It involves the possibility of the self's being the object of its own observation and recognition. And this in turn involves one of two things. Either the self can be divided up so that one part of it can observe another part; but if this division of the self is once begun there seems to be no reason for stopping it short of infinity; and, further, what claim has any one of these sub-divisions of the self to be regarded as *the* self which is observing *the* self? Or, alternatively, if this division of the self is unsatisfactory, it may be suggested that the self can regard itself as in a mirror and comment on its own actions; but there seems to be no recognizable mirror in the self to correspond to the external mirror in which we, as we say, see ourselves brushing our hair; and, further, how, if the self regards itself in the supposed mirror, can the image refrain from doing all that the observing and commentating self does? If 'self' means anything it means one, indivisible, self-identical person; and this kind of self-consciousness, which involves the denial of each of these attributes, Descartes does not mean

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by the consciousness which is his prime fact. When he says that I am conscious when I am willing or doubting he does not mean that I am conscious *of* willing or doubting ; what he means is simply that whatever I am doing some kind of activity is going on, an activity not necessarily intellectual (he carefully guards against that misinterpretation), but an activity of conscious spirit. What it amounts to is this, that whenever I do something I am conscious : that is the fundamental fact behind which we cannot go, that in my process of doubting there is an activity of doubting going on.

That, perhaps, seems to be hardly worth saying, certainly not worth hailing, as it has been hailed, as the foundation of any satisfactory philosophical structure. But the consequences are enormous ; and they are summed up in Descartes' own phrase, *Cogito ergo sum*, I think, therefore I am. '*Cogito*', as we have said, conveys no strictly intellectual meaning, so 'think' is a mistranslation if 'think' implies activity of the intellect alone ; it means 'I am conscious'. And the whole phrase then means, 'I am conscious, therefore I exist'. He finds that the one fact that he cannot doubt is his own consciousness ; and the fact of his consciousness proves the fact of his existence. This is Descartes' great contribution to philosophy, that he has given to each one of us rational grounds for affirming that whatever may be denied this at least is clear, that I exist. The process of doubting must stop somewhere, not because we want it to, not because we are tired of the doubting game, not from any choice or desire of ours, but from its own very nature. If you are engaged in the conscious act of doubting your own existence you are in that act mentally active ; and if you are mentally active you exist. So the very act of doubting your existence proves that you exist.

But what if you are deluded when you think that you are doubting ? Suppose the whole of my existence and therefore of my thinking is an illusion, that I am con-

tinually being deceived into thinking that I am thinking whereas really I do not exist or think at all ; what happens then ? Can this so-called proof of my existence be applied at all ? Descartes himself foresaw this objection and answered it. He is prepared to imagine that instead of God there exists a malignant demon whose purpose it is to deceive all mankind and induce them always to think erroneously whenever they think at all. There would then be absolutely no valid thinking in the universe, or at any rate in that part of it which is known to human intelligence, and it might seem that any attempt to prove any individual human existence from the fact of its being conscious would inevitably fail. But Descartes says,<sup>1</sup> quite simply, ‘ Doubtless, then, I exist, since I am deceived ; and, let him deceive me as he may, he can never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I shall be conscious that I am something.’ In fact, this objection falls on the simple ground that if I am to be deceived by a malignant demon or by anybody else I must be there to be deceived. Of two things one, either I am rightly conscious of my own existence, in which case there is no question, or I am deceived, either by myself or by some external power, into such consciousness, in which case I must exist to be deceived.

To Descartes’ simple paradox, that to doubt one’s own existence is to prove it, many other objections have been raised, both in his own time and since. The first and most dangerous is a purely formal one, that even if the statement is true it is not the fundamental truth. This attack is directed against the form in which the maxim is stated, the form *Cogito ergo sum*. If this is true, it is objected, its truth depends on a form of logical argument, on the syllogism, and the form of the syllogism demands a general or universal proposition which Descartes does not express but which is nevertheless necessary to complete his argument. The syllogism is a species

<sup>1</sup> ‘ Meditations ’, ii.

of the general form of argument in which a relation between two terms is inferred from their relations to a third, and the most common form of it is : All A is B, C is A, therefore C is B ; and a usual example is : All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal. There are two premises, each a grammatical sentence with a subject, the verb 'to be', and a predicate, something which is affirmed of the subject, the major, which is, in this case at least, a universal statement prefixed by 'All', and the minor, a particular statement about one person, Socrates, bringing him under the heading of the subject of the major. These produce the conclusion that what is asserted of the subject of the major can also be asserted of the subject of the minor, since the subject of the minor is one case of the subject of the major. If I know that all oranges are sweet and that this particular thing in front of me is an orange, I know that this particular thing is sweet. We are concerned at present less with the validity and value of the syllogism in general than with its application to the fundamental precept of Descartes, but it would be well to ask, in passing, if there is any weakness visible in the syllogistic form of argument in general. Is it possible to say that all men are mortal until you know whether the particular man you are now talking about is mortal ? Can you say that all oranges are sweet until you know if the particular thing in front of you, admitted to be an orange, is sweet ? That is to say, can you ever make the universal statement which is the major premiss of a syllogism until you know the conclusion, and know too that the conclusion will fall under the general statement of the major ? It is easy to see how this difficulty is alleged to affect Descartes. If he says, 'I am conscious, therefore I exist,' he is said to be making a syllogism, The major premiss is not expressed, but understood ; and it would be 'All things that are conscious exist.' So that his argument would be : All things that are

conscious exist, I am conscious, therefore I exist. The objection is not that he has omitted the major premiss, but that he is not going as far back in his doubting as he might have and ought to have, for behind the fact of his own existence, which he is pretending to doubt, lies the general fact, that all things that are conscious exist, on which his whole argument is based.

But this attack too was explicitly met by Descartes himself, who said that it was based on a misunderstanding of the way in which general or universal statements are arrived at. The only way of reaching a general statement is by the observation of particular cases ; the only way in which the universal statement 'All things that are conscious exist' can be reached is by the examination of individual cases, one of which is the one with which we are at present concerned, the case, namely, that I am conscious, therefore I exist. Indeed, so far from the truth of this particular depending on an argument from general or universal statements, the universal statement itself could not be true unless the particular statement were true, antecedently and independently.

The same answer meets another objection, that he has no right to say '*I* am conscious, therefore *I* exist,' but only 'There is consciousness, therefore there is existence,' for he has not yet established any meaning for the word '*I*', nor does he know that such a thing as the continuous and identical subject to which he is giving that name exists at all. But he pointed out that the method of arriving at ideas for which we use abstract nouns like 'consciousness' and 'existence' is similar to that by which we reach general or universal statements, namely that of taking many particular cases and isolating one feature which they all possess in common. To be able to say that all men are mortal we must have found an attribute, mortality, present in all particular cases of human beings : to be able to use the noun 'consciousness' we must have isolated from the particular cases of

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I conscious, you conscious, he conscious, the common quality, and given to it one name, ignoring the particular persons who possess it. Just as the particular cases precede the general statement, so the particular concrete conscious persons precede the abstract noun 'consciousness'. Nor, indeed, would it be possible for him to talk of 'consciousness' at all until he had inferred the existence of other conscious minds from observation of the behaviour of their bodies, and this he cannot yet do in a world in which there is, as yet, nothing but his own particular concrete conscious person. So we return to the meaning of the particular concrete instance : I am conscious, therefore I exist.

This itself is not as clear or unambiguous as might at first sight appear. It does not mean that my existence and my consciousness are synonymous or that the words 'existence' and 'consciousness' can be used interchangeably, nor does it mean that my thinking or consciousness brings into existence or creates my existence, nor does it mean that I exist because I think that I exist. It amounts to this, that my being conscious implies my existence. My being conscious is, so far as my awareness goes, the first thing, the fundamental fact which we have been seeking. But simply by itself it is not complete ; that is, the fact of my being conscious has implications beyond itself, it will not let us stop at itself, it compels us to go on. So, although it is the first fact it implies at least one other, the fact of my existence. I cannot be conscious without existing : I am conscious ; therefore I exist. At least in so far as I am conscious I am revealed to myself as existing. I could never be aware of the fact of my own existence except through the fact of my being conscious. And though it is true that before I can be conscious I must exist to be capable of being conscious, I could and can never know of my existence except through the revelation of it in consciousness.

Now this fundamental fact does not, by itself, prove that

I exist when I am not conscious. Descartes was asked what he thought happened when he went to sleep : he was not consciously active, and therefore he had no guarantee that he existed : did he suppose that he was literally a new man every morning, and at every other time when, having been unconscious, he became conscious again ? And his answer was that when he was asleep he was conscious. He was compelled to say that to preserve his continuous and identical existence on the guarantee of his fundamental principle. The mind, he said, is always conscious, but because of the feebleness of impressions that come to the brain when I am asleep I do not always remember. What wonder is it, he asks, that we do not always remember the thoughts of our sleep or lethargy, when we often do not remember the thoughts of our waking hours ? Continuous existence is not proved by the principle, except on this supposition, that the self is always conscious.

But, on the other hand, it is unfair to assume, as some later philosophers did assume, that there was any evidence here for the opposite view, for the view, that is, that there is no continuous self, but only a succession of disconnected momentary or instantaneous states, guaranteed by disconnected and instantaneous moments of consciousness, the view of David Hume. This is not what Descartes meant, because on this view consciousness and existence are identical, there is no difference between them, my existence consists simply and solely in my being at this moment conscious. Whereas Descartes' view was that consciousness implies and reveals existence.

We have, then, our fundamental fact, a double-sided fact, the fact of our existence guaranteed by our consciousness or of our consciousness guaranteeing our existence, whichever seems the more fruitful formulation. It will hereafter be assumed that Descartes has made out his case, that this is the one fundamental fact which cannot be doubted, since the very act of doubting it proves its

truth. If anybody is unconvinced he can only be asked to think of something more ultimate and more fundamental than consciousness, and while he is so engaged we who believe will try to build on this foundation which we accept as sound.

There is one difficulty which must be cleared up before we proceed. How do we know that Descartes has made out his case? How do we know that there is any truth at all in his statement that because he is conscious therefore he exists? What proof can there be of such a contention? We have seen already that, on Descartes' own showing, the syllogistic form of argument does not apply to it: and of that we were not sorry, for we have suspected a defect in the syllogism as such which would incline us to suspect anything which it claimed to prove. But if this principle is not to be proved by a logical form of argument how are we to know and accept its truth? Only, it seems, in a way similar to that in which we recognize the truth of certain other statements which are, equally with it, incapable of demonstrative proof. Many of the most ordinary and intimate truths with which we are acquainted and of which we make daily use are not proved by any form of demonstration: what is more, they are incapable of such proof. This is not because they are irrational, or even non-rational like the utterances of the poet and the mystic, but because they are the points from which a demonstration starts, not the point which it reaches. Before a chain of argument can begin there must be some fact, or perception, or hypothesis, from which it starts and from which conclusions are drawn by stages of argumentation. But unless there were a starting-point which could be set without argument the particular argument which intends to start from this particular starting-point could never begin, for the starting-point would have to be justified demonstratively, which would involve the demonstrative justification of the starting-point of that justification, and so on for ever

backwards in an indefinite regress. It is to overcome this difficulty that the scientist makes arbitrary hypotheses, which he makes no attempt to justify, and starts from these ; he is under no obligation whatever to prove their validity, but we, who claim the right to criticize these hypotheses, must offer some justification of our claim that our starting-point, *Cogito ergo sum*, is a true statement. This cannot be done demonstratively, for it is itself the basis of all demonstration ; is there any way in which it can be done ? It can be done by including it in the class of what are known as self-evident truths. 'Self-evident' is a dangerous word, and to claim that a truth is self-evident sounds very much like asserting that although I cannot prove it I still believe it just because I want to do so or, with Locke, that I have an infallible intuition of its truth, and therefore it must be true. But this is due to a misconception of the meaning of the word 'self-evident'. To call a truth self-evident is not to assert that I can see its truth and if you cannot you must be preternaturally stupid ; nor is it to assert that it is a truth which is apparent to babes and lunatics. Rather it means that this is a statement which, when its meaning is understood, cannot, from the nature of its meaning and from the nature of human thinking, be denied or even doubted. It is a statement which must be true, not because we want it to be so but because thinking is impossible if it is not so. All the so-called Laws of Thought are of this kind ; I cannot prove, demonstratively, that 'A thing cannot both be and not be so-and-so', or that 'Contradictory propositions cannot both be true', for any process of demonstration presupposes the truth of these statements ; before I can begin to prove anything at all I must be aware of their validity. But nobody, for that reason, supposes that these statements are untrue ; rather they are self-evidently true, that is, their truth is, from their own nature, evident to anyone who understands them. Similarly with our fundamental proposition that

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consciousness guarantees existence. It cannot be proved demonstratively, but it is not for that reason to be suspected of being false, for it is of such a nature that when once its meaning is understood its truth is, from its own nature and meaning, apparent. And if it is denied, thinking must stop, if, indeed, it could ever have begun.

Some confusion and obscurity may have been caused by an apparently indiscriminate use of the words 'fact' and 'truth' about this fundamental principle of consciousness. The words 'true' and 'false' do not, strictly speaking, apply to anything except judgments, statements, or propositions (the differences in the meanings of these words need not trouble us at present). So a fact cannot be true. But the fundamental fact of which we have been speaking is my consciousness, and the truth about it is expressed in the statement, 'I am conscious'; the fact cannot, technically, be either true or false, but the statement about it can be, and is, true.

### ii. *Solipsism*

Now we must retrace our steps. We have our unshakable foundation; is there any possibility of rebuilding on it some of the structure we have previously demolished? This is a task which we must approach without prejudice and without preference. If we are to go forward from our certain fact, we must do so in the spirit which led us back to it: that is, we must refuse to admit anything which is not guaranteed, we must not impose on the foundation anything except what it itself actually demands for its completion. We must keep strictly within the bounds of certainty and rigid implication; we must not build as we would like, but as we must; we must beware always of a temptation to assert something as true because we want it to be true.

What, then, is implied in our assertion of the double fact of our consciousness and existence? Is anything at all implied? Or can we take that one certain fact as

the only certain fact, and everything else as illusion? The first enthusiastic impulse, doubtless, is to say 'Yes'. The young philosopher, fresh from his enjoyable game of doubt, convinced of the illusoriness of everything, gaily asserting that when he leaves the room the table does vanish and that when there's no one about in the Quad the tree cannot continue to be, confusing doubting with denying, glad to have escaped from what he disparagingly calls 'the level of common sense' to the superior heights of what he believes is called Idealism, is quite content to affirm that nothing exists except himself and his own experience, and that the whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth are emptiness and vanity. He is real, and his experience is real, but there is nothing else whatever in the universe. This view is called Solipsism or, barbarously, Panegoism, and has been well defined<sup>1</sup> as 'the doctrine that all existence is experience, and that there is only one experient. The Solipsist thinks that *he is the one.*' It is a theory which has many attractions, and one which is very difficult to controvert if it is held firmly and consistently, but we must examine a little more closely exactly what it is that it asserts.

How far can we get, strictly, on the basis of *Cogito ergo sum*? If we consider any moment of our experience, of our existence or of our consciousness, what do we find? If I am looking at a tree, or thinking of an abstract idea like justice, or desiring food, or playing tennis, what exactly are the parts which go to make up the whole of the moment of experience? If we consider first the subject of the experience, the 'I' that is doing one of these various things, do we find any guarantee, in one moment of experience, that there is any I at all beyond that particular moment? The experience, the consciousness, is recognized as 'mine' because that is the only way in which I can perceive it: I cannot have exactly anybody else's perceptions, if only from considerations

<sup>1</sup> By F. C. S. Schiller in 'Mind', April 1909.

of time and space ; but is the ‘mine’ of this moment of experience necessarily connected with the ‘mine’ of the experiences of yesterday, last week, ten years ago ? Is the ‘I’ that is now conscious of the blue sky, the same ‘I’ that looked at the blue sky a year ago ? At present we are not concerned with this problem of personal identity in detail, but we must notice that if, as the Solipsist claims, nothing exists but himself, and all other people and things are figments of his imagination, it is equally clear that he himself, on his own arguments, does not exist except at the particular moment when he is conscious. There is absolutely no guarantee that he is the same person yesterday as to-day, or that he exists at all outside the separate and distinct moment of his present experience. Descartes himself, who was not a Solipsist, felt this difficulty about the continued existence of the self. If I only exist when I am conscious, then when I go to sleep either I cease to exist or I remain conscious : and Descartes chose the latter alternative that the mind is always conscious. He was compelled to take this line, for otherwise existence would be simply intermittent and disconnected, and there would be no grounds for connecting the ‘I’ of yesterday with the ‘I’ of to-day. This difficulty is less present for metaphysics than it is for ethics and jurisprudence, for there the practical application is clear ; if there is no proof that a man is the same man yesterday as to-day then no man can be held morally or legally responsible to-day for acts committed by one who is alleged to be, but actually was not, himself yesterday. If I am accused to-day of having committed a murder yesterday, my plea, on these terms, would be that it was not the ‘I’ of to-day who committed the crime, but a totally unrelated person of yesterday who does not deserve the name ‘I’ ; why then should the ‘I’ of to-day be punished for it ? But whether Descartes’ solution, of a continuously conscious mind, is accepted or not, at any rate the Solipsist, in

any given moment of experience, has no right whatever to go beyond that moment in the affirmation of his existence. He cannot say, as he does, that nothing exists but his own mind and its states ; all he can say is that the present state of his mind exists. And that seems to be not quite worth saying.

Secondly, the case must be considered from the side of the content or object of the experience. For to every experience there is this other side ; no less than a subject there must be an object, experience must be experience of something, a simple fact which is often and disastrously ignored. There is no experience which has not these two sides, a subject and an object, a self and a not-self. Experience is not, and cannot be, a one-sided affair, with simply a subject experiencing in a vague general way but not experiencing something definite. To think of it as one-sided is to commit a very common fault, that of talking about an abstract noun, such as 'experience', as if it were something real apart from various actual concrete experiences. In every concrete experience we are aware that we must experience something ; it is when we begin to talk of experience in general, often with a capital E, that we leave concrete experiences behind and think we can talk of our experience without remembering that there must also be something which we experience. And if we remember that experience is two-sided we shall see that direct experience, so far from guaranteeing the position of the Solipsist, destroys it. For the object which is experienced is no less real than the subject which experiences it, and his contention that there is nothing real except his own mind and its states falls to the ground. If his mental states are real, the objects of them are correspondingly real ; if the objects are illusory, his experience of them is illusory. It is no argument against this thesis of the equal reality of subject and object in experience to produce dreams and hallucinations and to say, 'In dreams and hallucinations the object of the

experience is unreal, therefore on your view the subject is unreal, which is absurd since it denies the reality of the dreamer.' Such an objector misunderstands the nature of dreams and hallucinations. There is nothing unreal about the experience of dreaming dreams and seeing visions. As objects of experience the £1,000,000 I dream of myself as possessing or the pink rats observed by the sufferer from a well-known disease are just as real as this table or that window. Their so-called unreality comes from a comparison of them with other things by means of a definite standard, in this case the world of what we call waking life. It is only, or at any rate chiefly, because they do not fit into the system of my waking life that I call them unreal, because they interfere with the coherence and systematic unity of a particular kind of experience which for practical purposes we take as our standard, the experience of waking life. We call a man insane if he says he is a coffee-pot, because he does not look or behave consistently as we expect coffee-pots to look and behave; but it is difficult to estimate the degree of reality or unreality to be attached to the dream-experiences of Kipling's Brushwood Boy. There is, further, the prejudice, for it is nothing more, that things which we can touch and feel and kick are more real than things which we think or imagine or dream. What grounds are there for supposing that tables are more real than ideas?

There is one further argument which can be directed against the Solipsist's position that nothing is real but his own mind and its states, a practical argument. Why, if all the things that are normally called external and physical are states of his own mind, can he not control them as he wishes? If I try to take the 10.50 train to London I recognize the necessity of being at the station not later than that time; but for the Solipsist this necessity should not arise if the train, its driver and all its passengers are creatures of his own invention. Yet

there will be other passengers, often enough of them to make the train uncomfortably full, the train will have come from somewhere and will be going to somewhere, definite places which even the Solipsist could find out from Bradshaw. And, saddest of all, if he arrives at the station at 10.55 the train will have gone. Why, if it and all its accompaniments are states of his mind? Finally, where do good Solipsists go when they are knocked down from behind by that state of mind which the rest of the world calls a motor-car?

The objects of experience, it is argued against the Solipsist, are as real, neither more nor less, as the subject of the experience. He may, in a last desperate effort, try to claim that they are real, but not independently existing. He may say that they are not independently real, not independently existing, but real for his experience, real as objects of his perception. This may be true; it may be that there is nothing real except as experienced by a sentient subject. But it is not an argument for Solipsism unless the real things as experienced are simply states of the mind of the experiencing subject. And how a thing can at the same time be both a real thing, even if its reality depends on its being experienced, and a state of somebody's mind the Solipsist still has to explain.

It helps him not at all to claim that the reality of which he is talking is composed not merely of direct and immediate experience, but of experience also which is the outcome of reflection and the spontaneous activity of the mind. For in suggesting that there is such a thing as this indirect experience he is postulating a continuous mind which can hold together different moments of direct experience, reflect on them, and recognize them as belonging to one single subject. And, further, if once he goes beyond direct experience in his search for a continuing mind he is lost in another way. The continuing self can only be an inference from particular moments; we have seen that the only subject of a particular moment

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of direct experience is one which has no claim to be regarded as continuing, and if it is so regarded it can only be by inferring, that is, by a process of reasoning from what is before us and apparent to what is neither present nor obvious. I infer, that is, if I see a group of people in academic dress outside the Clarendon Building at a quarter to ten in the morning that they are going to try to explain to the Proctors that they were not treating the rules of the University with contempt on the previous night. I argue from what I see, the group of defendants, to what I cannot see, the Proctors inside the Building, and the law-breaking of the night before. And my inference may be either right or wrong ; they may be there for some quite different reason, there may be a Degree Ceremony in the Sheldonian Theatre, or they may be waiting to give the Proctors an ovation. But whether it is right or wrong the fundamental principle is the same, the argument from that which is here present to that which is not present, but which we believe to be connected in some way (usually, it happens, causally connected), with what is present. So the Solipsist claims to infer from the present experience that the 'I' which is having the experience is the same as the 'I' which had that other experience yesterday, on which, and on the knowledge derived from which, I make my present judgment. It has already been pointed out that he cannot do this without assuming what he is trying to prove. For he cannot infer, he cannot reflect, he cannot remember, he cannot do anything but simply have this present momentary experience unless he has the continuing self or mind which he is trying to prove by the inference, the reflection, or the remembering.

If he claims that it is not the inferred continuous 'I' but the possibility of being able to infer at all, two obviously different things, that proves his continuous existence, then he is in trouble from the side of the object. For, if you consider the two separate experiences

of two different days but with the same materials what do you prove about the subject of the experiences that you do not also prove about the object? If I yesterday saw this table and again to-day see this table, two separate experiences with the same materials, what do I prove about the reality and continuous existence of myself and the table? If it is granted that I can infer the continuous existence of myself from the recollection, when I look at it again to-day, of what the table looked like to me yesterday, is not the continued existence of the table yesterday and to-day equally guaranteed? If there is no proof of anything about the table except that it existed at the moment of yesterday's experience and existed again at the moment of to-day's experience, is there proof of anything more about the perceiving subject? If yesterday the table had no marks on it, and to-day has a deep cut across it, should I not naturally say, 'That table was not scratched like that yesterday'? I should thereby admit that the table in yesterday's experience and the table in to-day's is one and the same, the scratch, which indicates the difference, suggesting the identity, just as much as the 'I' in yesterday's experience and the 'I' in to-day's is one and the same 'I'. The point of this argument is not to establish the continued identity of external things, that we shall have to consider later, but simply to show that if the Solipsist deserts direct and immediate experience and tries to prove by an appeal to indirect or reflective experience the thesis that he and his states of mind alone are real, he finds himself driven to quite the opposite conclusion, that the continued existence of physical things is just as much guaranteed as the continued existence of himself, neither more nor less. Granting, that is, the possibility of inference and the consequent possibility of indirect experience, which is, actually, probably greater both in volume and in importance than direct momentary experience, the arguments which establish the continued existence of the Solipsist's

'I' are just as valid to establish the continuous existence of external material things and of other thinking minds. It is true that these last, other minds, are, as we have noticed before, doubly inferred. We infer that we are the same as we were yesterday, equally we infer that objects which we have seen yesterday and to-day are the same (for instance, other people's bodies) and observing them to behave in the same ways as before we infer behind or within them continuous minds controlling them in the way in which we control our own bodies. Other minds are the last things the Solipsist is anxious to establish ; he would have the world composed simply of himself and his own states of mind as the only objects. But precisely the same arguments by which he hopes to effect this construction establish the existence of other minds apparently quite independent of his. It should never be forgotten that we can never have direct experience of ourselves as continuous : our own continuous existence is an intellectual construction. And the continuous existence of other minds and of physical things is neither more nor less a construction.

### iii. *Subject and Object*

In this brief treatment of one of the most popular and attractive of philosophical systems we have started several hares. We cannot pursue them all at once, and we shall be able to do no more than languidly observe a few of them before we turn again to our main enquiry. But the most important of them is the relation which has been insisted on and emphasized between subject and object, percipient and perceived, self and not-self, in whichever form the antithesis is most clear. This relation is a fact which we cannot escape. It is, indeed, our second certain and primitive fact. We have seen that the fundamental fact of our experience, the one fact we cannot doubt without by that very doubting proving it, is the fact of our own consciousness and our own

existence as conscious. But that fact cannot stand in isolation, as the Solipsist would have it stand, because in its very nature it contains the necessity of passing beyond itself into another fact. If we are conscious we must be conscious of something. And Descartes saw this. When he doubted the existence of external things, on his way back to the prime fact of consciousness, he did not deny their existence : he simply found that there was no reason inherent in them for supposing that they did exist. The reason is now found not in themselves but in their presence in the experience of the percipient subject. Their existence is guaranteed not by their own merits, but by the fact that without them consciousness, the experience of a subject, an experience whose existence cannot be doubted, would be impossible. So their existence, which had been doubted but never denied, is now re-affirmed. If consciousness is to exist it must be consciousness of something : so if the experiencing subject is real and genuine the experienced object is real and genuine too.

But beyond this simple affirmation of the reality of the object in the subject-object relation lies a whole wilderness of problems. It is no exaggeration to say that on the precise meaning and value given by a thinker to the object in this relation the whole system of his metaphysics depends. What exactly is this object ? Is it simply the momentary content of my momentary experience ? That is all we have any right to call it if we depend on direct and immediate experience. Is it affected or not affected by being in this relation to a subject ? To say that it is not affected is to say that outside this relation it is the same as it is inside it. But we know nothing of it except in this or in other similar relations : how then can we say what it is like outside these relations, and compare it as it is outside with it as it is inside ? But, on the other hand, if we say that it is affected by the relation in which it stands to a subject we seem to be

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denying that it has any fixity or independence of existence at all, and to be asserting that outside this and similar relations it has no meaning. And if we say that, we are, in some degree at least, claiming that the object is shaped, moulded, or formed by the subject. This is the point at which the two great metaphysical highways diverge. If it is believed that the object has an existence independently of its presence to a subject, if, that is, it is believed that it is possible to call it not merely an object in relation to a subject but an independent thing, the system of metaphysics involved is Materialism or Realism. If, on the other hand, it is believed that the object is, by its own nature and fundamentally, simply an object for a subject, and that outside this or a similar relation it has neither meaning nor existence, then the metaphysical system involved is some kind of Idealism ; it is affirmed, that is, that Reality is in some sense dictated by the mind of a subject, which may be a single self, or God, or the Absolute, and that it is therefore mental and ideal. This book is not intended to compel anybody to think in either of these two ways rather than the other ; but it seems that some conclusion must be reached on so important a point. It will therefore be necessary to point out some of the difficulties involved by each of these main views.

### *Consult further :*

Descartes. ‘Meditations’ and ‘Discourse on Method’.  
Locke. ‘Essay concerning Human Understanding’, esp. Bk.  
IV.

F. H. Bradley. ‘Appearance and Reality’, chap. xxi.

## CHAPTER III

### THINGS

#### i. *The Nature of the Object*

Our concern now is with the nature of the object. But lest we should be accused of prejudging the issue by the very use of the word ‘object’, which might seem to imply that the object was an object for a subject and nothing else, we will try to ignore its ‘objectness’ and call it, quite simply, a thing. And for the present we will concentrate our attention on things which are normally supposed to be physical, material and external to the subject, ignoring such things as states of mind, imaginations, hallucinations, ideas, thoughts, hopes and fears, which could all, without injustice, be called internal, mental and subjective, in the sense that without and apart from the subject which was experiencing them they would have no existence at all. For the present we will attend only to the external object or thing. And we will take the simplest case we can find; suppose I am looking at an apple, a simple case of the relation of percipient subject to perceived object. Our question is, ‘What is the apple?’

Let us adopt the most primitive and child-like attitude we can and rid ourselves of preconceptions. Before us, in this act of perception, is a thing fairly round, or at least of a determinate shape, hard, green, shiny, smooth, which occupies a certain definite amount of space and has various effects on the senses of touch, sight, taste and smell. That seems clear enough, and ordinary enough. But suppose I am colour-blind. Then the apple retains its other qualities, but is no longer green. Put out the

light, and it no longer has any colour at all. And if I were to be in the state of an invalid it would not taste the same as it would if I were well. It is possible too that it does not present to all who look at it or touch it the same sensations ; certainly there are cases when what we call a delicate touch feels something which the ordinary undeveloped sense of touch does not perceive. And the same applies to the sense of smell. In all the senses we find the same difficulty, that we have no guarantee that they serve us all alike. We can never know that our own sensations of sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing are similar to those of other people ; we do find that for ordinary practical purposes they coincide sufficiently, but the experience of differences is common enough in the case of what we call highly-developed senses, in the ear of the musician or the touch of the blind. So in this instance we find that our seemingly innocent and stable apple admits of alarming variations, since it may be for one man green, for another grey ; for one sweet, for another sour ; and so on. And what the apple itself is can we say ? Is the apple itself sweet, or is it sweet only for somebody who tastes it ? Is the apple itself green, or sweet, or smooth, or round ? Or is it dependent for its qualities on being perceived by somebody, with the possibility of those qualities varying for different percipients ? The difficulty is plain. We are trying to find what the apple really is, and all we can find is a list of its various appearances to various percipients. Instead of what it is we can only find what it seems. There is no reality, there is only appearance. This is a conclusion which we may indeed, in the end, be compelled to adopt, but it is so paradoxical and, to many, unwelcome, that various attempts to avoid or escape from it have been made.

## ii. *Primary and Secondary Qualities*

One of the most respectable and plausible of these attempts is the distinction between primary and secondary

qualities, which is instructive not only in itself but as a link between this particular problem and others. Let us return to our apple. The apple may be considered as a substance which possesses qualities. We have throughout used the word ' qualities ', which is intelligible enough, and the word ' substance ' we will for the moment postpone, except to say, roughly and vaguely, that it is the unity which is taken to be present behind the appearances, the sub-stratum in which all the qualities inhere. Let us, for the present, attend to the qualities. They were divided, by John Locke and the mathematical physicists of his day, into two kinds, called primary and secondary. The primary qualities are those which appear to be more important, more fundamental, more real, closer to the heart of the thing to which they belong ; while the secondary qualities, naturally, are those which are less permanent, less fundamental, more open to fluctuation and change, which change would affect the thing as a whole much less than would a change in any of the primary qualities. So, as a rough guide, it may be said that the primary qualities are those which concern the existence in space of the thing, while the secondary are those which are not spatial, which are, in Locke's words,<sup>1</sup> ' nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities '. For instance, solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest and number may be classed as primary, while colour, sound, taste and smell would be secondary. The number or shape of a thing is more important and more fundamental to it than its colour or temperature. It is more important for our apple that it should be one apple than that it should be green or red.

This distinction seems to be a very natural and a very sound one. And so it is, for two purposes, for the ordinary affairs of practical life, where philosophical

<sup>1</sup> ' *Essay concerning Human Understanding* ', Bk. II, viii, § 10.

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accuracy is rather an encumbrance than an asset, and for the sciences. It will be remembered that we called the sciences, without in any way meaning to disparage them but simply stating the nature which they have and which their real friends wish to recognize, essentially abstract. By that we meant, among other things, that the scientist ignores most of the aspects of his subject and concentrates his attention on one only. For him, therefore, it is not only desirable but necessary to draw this distinction between primary and secondary qualities ; although it may be that the qualities which are actually designated primary owe that name to the particular interests of those who first made the distinction. The physicist is concerned, clearly, with the strictly physical qualities of a thing, with its size, its shape, and its motion or rest ; it is quite immaterial to him whether the object of his experiments is red or green, sweet or sour, rough or smooth to the touch. To the chemist the colour, temperature and taste become more important. To the physiologist a man is such-and-such a collection of material constituents, and anything else he may be or possess, an immortal soul, the gift of tongues, or a talent for writing Latin verses, is of strictly secondary importance. To the psychologist a completely different set of qualities is of primary importance, while the chemical and physiological factors sink to some extent into the background. And so on, each scientist emphasizing what is important to him and calling the rest secondary.

So both for the ordinary man and for the scientist this distinction of primary and secondary qualities is valuable and useful. But with usefulness we are not concerned ; is the distinction ultimately valid ? Can it truly be said that some qualities really are primary and others really secondary ? We shall see, on examination, that it cannot. Let us, for brevity's sake, call the primary qualities those that are spatial and the secondary those that are not.. It is contended that the spatial part of a thing's nature is

more real and more proper to it than any other because any other depends, to a greater or less degree, on the presence of an observer. The sweetness of a thing depends on somebody's tasting it as sweet, the smoothness of our apple on somebody's feeling it as smooth, while its extension and its unity are real properties of the apple whether it is being perceived or not. The primary spatial qualities are therefore objective, in the sense that they really belong to the thing irrespective of the presence or absence of a percipient, while the secondary qualities are subjective, in the sense that they depend for their existence on being perceived by a subject to exist in the thing as an object of perception.

It is admitted that the secondary qualities are subjective ; our first question is, 'Are the primary qualities any less so ?' Is there in fact any more reality in the extension, shape, or number of a thing than in its taste or smell ? Is the apple actually and really one or extended in space unless somebody perceives it as such ? If the answer is that it really is one while it may be only apparently sweet, the second question is, 'How do you perceive or conceive its unity or extension ?' In short, even granting that the primary qualities are more real in the sense of being more important to the thing's existence than the secondary, is there any way of becoming acquainted with them except through and by means of the secondary qualities ? And in so far as the secondary qualities are subjective, in so far, that is, as they depend for their recognition as qualities on the presence of a percipient, does that not tell against the primariness of those other qualities which are apprehended and can only be apprehended by means of them ? If we are not careful we shall be driven to say exactly the opposite of what is intended by those who make the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, to say that it is only the secondary qualities, those which come from our direct perception of a thing, which are real, and that the primary

qualities, so-called, are a mental construction which we make from these. This, as has already been suggested, may be the truth of the matter, but it is not our present concern to decide that ; it is, certainly, the point of view of the artist, who is always concerned to see things not as his mind is conscious that they really are, for that way, to him, lies error and distortion, but actually and literally as they seem. For us, however, it is enough to note that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities passes over into its opposite simply on the ground that the secondary qualities are the only ones of which we are directly aware, and it is only through them, which are admittedly subjective, that we can have any knowledge of the primary qualities which are held to be more real, independent and objective. In answer to this objection the defender of the distinction has only one course open, to deny that the secondary qualities are necessary for our knowledge of the primary, and to say that it is possible for the objective primary qualities to exist without any admixture of those which are suspiciously subjective. To this our answer must be a polite scepticism. We ask him if he really can conceive of extension pure and simple : it must be extension without any secondary quality whatever, with no colour, no taste, no sound and no smell, plain extension, which would be called, significantly, unqualified. If, when he is pressed, he still claims that he can do this, we can but envy him and leave him in his blissful contemplation of pure primariness. But if, as seems more likely, it is impossible to conceive of extension without thinking of it as, at least, coloured, then the case for the distinction between primary and secondary qualities has broken down.

### iii. *Substance*

We have seen, then, that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, while it may be very useful for ordinary practical life and for the particular

and specialized studies of the scientist, is philosophically untenable. We have reached this conclusion simply from a consideration of the distinction itself and of the qualities distinguished. But we can go further, and in doing so we shall enter on a larger and more difficult subject. We began by enquiring what the apple really was, if it was anything really and in itself apart from a perceiving subject, and if it was possible to distinguish certain of its properties from certain others as more important and fundamental. We have seen no cause for this distinction, or for any hierarchy of qualities, except for practical and abstract purposes. Can we, then, admitting that the qualities are all on an equality with one another, affirm that they all are parts of some ultimate and fundamental real substance ? This is a suggestion based on a very ancient and dignified tradition, the doctrine of substance and accidents or substance and qualities. It holds, in brief, that there is a fundamental real thing which possesses the properties we associate with it, but is equally capable of possessing other qualities without damaging its real substantial nature. The apple *is* not the greenness and sweetness and smoothness, but it *possesses* or *contains* these qualities, just as it might contain other different qualities, which would not alter its substantial nature as an apple. And there is no reason, even, why it should not possess mutually contradictory attributes, so long as it does so at different times ; the apple may be hard, green and sour at one time, and soft, red and sweet when it is ripe, but it is the same apple nevertheless. Its substance remains unaltered, while its qualities, properties, attributes or accidents, the names are synonymous, vary so much as to become mutually contradictory. The example of human personality is still more forcible ; nobody really maintains that he is *not* the same person as he was fifteen years ago, yet in every possible accidental quality he may be utterly different, mentally, morally, physically and spiritually.

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Throughout these changes, some of them more and some of them less important, he feels that there is something, which has remained the same ; he is still the same person, the same substance, throughout. And if he does not feel so himself, if he is sufficiently sophisticated to disclaim all connection with the child of five who stole the jam, there is no lack in the world of friends and relations who will tell him how much he has changed. The phrase is important, for it admits, as it must, the change in the visible attributes, but it implies always the continuance of the substance ; it is he who has changed, he, the something permanent behind the flow of change. If there were not a permanent 'he', the word 'change' would be meaningless ; there would be nothing to change, there would merely be at two different times two utterly different and independent sets of visible attributes, with no mutual connection and no suggestion, implicit or explicit, that they belonged to one subject. That is the paradox of change, that only the permanent changes : without permanence there is no meaning whatever in change.

The something which is permanent, the apple, the personality, the tree that is bare in winter, green in spring and brown in autumn, is called the substance, that which stands below the changing surface as the substratum supporting the accidental properties which are from time to time visible, and which are continually changing. Now there is one oversight against which we must be on our guard. It is very easy, and very natural, to assume that substance is physical and material ; and to assume that its greater reality in comparison with the accidents comes from the physical permanence which we associate with the apple or the tree in comparison with the changing qualities of which only the perceiving subject is conscious. There seems to be something more real about the physical substance of the apple than there could be about a quality, greenness or sweetness, which is due

in part at least to the perceiving subject. This assumption is a very natural one, and it may be justified, but it should be remembered that it is simply an assumption. There is no more reason that this substance should be material than that it should be the opposite, spiritual or mental. And in the case which we found to be the most plausible for the substance-accidents relation, that of human personality, clearly the underlying permanent substance is not material. A man's body does not look the same as it did fifteen years ago ; on the contrary every single part of it looks different ; and according to some biologists every single atom of the physical constituents of the body changes every seven years. It may be almost as difficult to make out a claim for the non-material part ; almost, if not quite, all his thoughts, volitions, hopes, desires and fears are different from those of fifteen years ago. But here there is some sign of a continuous growth or evolution, if not in the actual mental states at least in their direction. But at present our purpose is rather to point out that the assumption of the existence of a physical substratum is simply an assumption than to press the claims of the non-physical. And since every man is, before he reflects, a materialist, the warning may not be superfluous.

The ordinary materialistic view of substance is simple enough. Behind and below the varying attributes which we see there is an unchanging, single, real substance. Subtract from the table or the apple all those qualities which depend on the percipient subject and you are left with the unvarying substance. That, the simplest form of the doctrine, is recognizable at once. In taking away all that is in any way due to the presence of the thing in a subject-object relation we are taking away all that we have previously called secondary qualities, and what we have left is a collection of primary qualities. This collection of primary qualities, then, would, on this view, be equated with the substance, the real table or the real

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apple. But we have already, by anticipation, demonstrated that this simple position is untenable, for the primary qualities are, we saw, no less dependent on our perception than the secondary ; in fact, were it not for the secondary qualities we should never know of the existence of those, which are called primary. And this is enough to show that the mere residuum with which we are left after eliminating the secondary qualities is not independent enough to justify our giving to it the name substance.

So a refinement of this view is necessary. It is not the primary qualities themselves which are the substance, but something else which lies below them, in which they inhere, or which possesses them. But how much does this actually help us ? The substance, it is true, is now no longer dependent on our perception of it, as it was when the aggregate of primary qualities was called substance. But if this is the case, what do we know about that substance ? This is the difficulty, either we must give the name of substance to qualities which depend to some extent at least on our perception of them, and if we do that we are taking away all meaning from the word substance, for if it means anything it means a real thing independent of our perception of it ; or we give the name of substance to something underlying all these qualities, something which, by definition, we cannot perceive by sense, and if we do that do we not put something there for which we have neither evidence nor use ? If we can know nothing about it how do we know that it is there ? If I make a complete list of all the qualities of this table which I can perceive, an exhaustive list, made from all points of view and under all conditions, is there anything else which *is* the table and *possesses* as attributes all those qualities which I perceive ? I do not know that there is ; if I did know I should put it in the list of qualities that I observe. Since I cannot know anything about this table except on the evidence of my senses, anything else

that it may be said to have or to be seems to be a pure invention. If it has or is a substance apart from its accidents I can never know it, never perceive it, never experience it ; why, then, should I suppose it to be there ? Admittedly I may, intellectually, associate with the table certain things I never actually see or touch in it. I say, for example, that the table is square, though I have never seen it as square. But to say that the squareness was part of the substance of the table would be to go back on the premiss that the substance of the table is independent of the perception of a subject. The squareness which I attribute to the table is certainly never an object of my direct experience, but it is a quality which I reflectively apply to it on the basis of my sense-perceptions, the only possible basis for all reflection. And so it becomes doubly dependent on my intervention, first in my sense-perceptions and secondly in my reflection on those perceptions. And what is so doubly dependent on me cannot, with any meaning at all, be said to exist independently of me or of my senses, which is what substance is said to do.

But apart from the difficulty of the connection between the substance and my perceptions there is a grave difficulty within the thing or object itself. What is meant when it is said that a thing possesses certain qualities, or that these qualities inhere in the substance ? What is the substance without the qualities ? This question is very similar to that which we asked when we were considering the difference between primary and secondary qualities. Then we asked how a primary quality, extension for example, could be conceived without a secondary quality, for example colour : here we have to ask how substance can be conceived of as existing without a quality of some kind. Is there any meaning in existence pure and simple ? Can existence be thought of except as of something existing in a certain determinate way ? And to exist in a determinate way is to have at least one of these

qualities which we are trying to cut away in our search for unqualified substance. Is the word being intelligible unless it means being something definite? We saw that to experience, pure and simple, was impossible: it was inevitable that we should experience something. Is it the same with being? Is it possible, or is it not, to be without being something? To say that it is not is to endorse the first of the paradoxes of Hegel, that being pure and simple is exactly the same as not-being, there is nothing whatever to choose between them, for the only sense in which being has any meaning is in the sense of being something definite, existing in a definite and determinate way, having a quality. Without a quality substance is unintelligible. In the words of John Locke,<sup>1</sup> ‘If anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called “accidents”.’ But what the relation between the quality and the substance can be we cannot know, any more than we can know the substance itself without the quality. If that is so, are we not justified in concluding, with Bishop Berkeley, that the conception of material substance is both useless and unintelligible, useless because if we cannot know anything about it it seems to be rather a waste of time to talk about it, and unintelligible because we can understand neither how we come to know it nor how it is connected with the qualities it is said to possess?

#### iv. *The Alternative*

We have seen some of the difficulties which are involved in the view that substance is material, or that material substance exists. But there is an alternative, which

<sup>1</sup> ‘Essay’, Bk. II, xxiii, § 2.

may appear paradoxical and strange, but may be nearer the truth, a position adopted, with considerable differences, by thinkers as different as Bradley, Spinoza, Leibniz and Berkeley. In spite of their differences they are all agreed that substance cannot, for the reasons we have examined, be considered as material, for that view involves too many contradictions and too many impossibilities. There remains only one alternative, that it should be not physical or material but the opposite, spiritual, mental, psychical, whichever of these words is the most congenial. ‘Spiritual’ is perhaps the best, because although it may be associated with religious feelings, which are not our concern, it does avoid the suggestion of ghosts which ‘psychical’ has and of the merely mental or intellectual creation of the human mind which clings to ‘mental’. So we will call this suggested non-material substance spiritual.

And while we are drawing distinctions, as we are between physical and spiritual, we will draw another in another direction. If physical and spiritual is a horizontal distinction, as if we said, ‘Here we will draw a line across; all views above it will believe substance to be spiritual and all below it will believe it to be physical’, there is a vertical distinction, a line which might be drawn to divide, on the left, all those views which hold that substance is one, and, on the right, all those views which hold substances to be many. The horizontal line divides materialist views of the universe from spiritual, the vertical line divides pluralistic views, which hold that there are many substances, from monistic views, which hold that there is only one real substance. We are then faced with four possibilities; we can have either a materialistic monism or a materialistic pluralism, or a spiritual monism or a spiritual pluralism. The materialist is equally at liberty to believe that there is one real substance or many, the former being a strict or scientific view, the latter the view of common-sense

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or ordinary pre-scientific experience. And similarly the spiritualist may believe either that the spiritual reality is one or that there are many independent spiritual substances.

Of materialism, in either of its forms, monistic or pluralistic, we need add only this to the difficulties which we have already seen to attend the notion of material substance, that it is, in the end, intellectual suicide. If the universe consists wholly and solely of unconscious matter, then what we normally call mind, together with its activities, is, if not itself sheer matter, merely one form among others, for instance heat and motion, of matter's many possible manifestations. There is nothing to distinguish what we call mind from heat, or to give us any reason for supposing that thought is more to be respected than temperature or rapidity of motion. If thought is no more than the manifestation of an accidental concourse of unconscious physical atoms it may be materially significant, as heat is, but it is, mentally regarded, meaningless. And all its works, the materialistic theories among them, become meaningless and valueless with it. The question of the superior truth or validity of the materialistic theory to others cannot arise if it, no less than the others, is a mere result of previous physical states. All exist, just as ice and water and steam exist, and it is as meaningless to say that materialism is truer than spiritualism as to say that ice is truer than steam, for the word truth has no meaning whatever. The materialist is in no better case than the sceptic, who, if he denies the validity of all argument and the possibility of finding truth, must also deny the validity of the arguments which led him to scepticism and the possibility of knowing that his sceptical position is the true one.

We will pass immediately to spiritualistic theories, and of the spiritual monists we will take as an example Spinoza, of the spiritual pluralists Leibniz.

Spinoza was a Dutch Jew, and it is not difficult to see the effects of Jewish theology and philosophy in his thought. And it is clear that his system is neither easy to understand nor generally acceptable from the fact that he has been called, by distinguished philosophers since his time, both 'this famous atheist' and a 'God-intoxicated man'. For him only that is real which is not conditioned by anything else, which is independent of causation from outside, and contains in itself its own cause. This being so, nothing can prevent its existence, for nothing operates on it from outside; it exists necessarily, and exists necessarily as it is. This is Spinoza's Substance, the self-caused and self-determined. There can, then, be only one Substance, for if there were several they would limit and interfere with each other, and none of them would be self-caused or intelligible apart from the others. And this Substance he identifies with God, which is the same thing as Nature. For he believes not that God creates nature from outside, but that God is the internal cause of all the universe of Nature. This may be, and often is, called Pantheism, but it is a very different thing to say that God *is* the universe of natural things, as Spinoza did say, from saying, as pantheism normally says, that each separate tree, flower or river is a god. Spinoza has one God, pantheism an indefinite number.

This real substance, or God, is the only real thing. But God possesses an infinite number of attributes. All finite things, individual bodies and minds, are finite modifications of two of these attributes, thought and extension. This by no means implies that these are the only two attributes of God; on the contrary, infinite substance has an infinity of attributes. But these are the only two which our minds are capable of comprehending, and then only through their finite modifications, particular finite mental and physical existences. Everything that is in the world, each finite mind and body, is

a phenomenal manifestation, or modification, of the one real substance, God. Translated, as far as possible, into the language of Christian theology, this means that in every individual person or thing God is immanent, that is, present in some form or another, without being transcendent, that is, beyond or outside the sum or series of the particular manifestations. Christianity, in common with other forms of Theism, believes in a God who is both immanent and transcendent, a God who is both the external cause of all that happens and is also himself realized in each particular thing or event. Spinoza believes in the latter half, in the presence of God or Substance in everything, but not in the former, that he is outside and beyond the sum of the particular manifestations of all his attributes.

This is a difficult enough view. Fundamentally it means that there is only one real thing, God, Substance, Nature, they all mean the same, with an infinite number of attributes, all of them ways in which God realizes himself. The only two ways in which we are capable of perceiving these particular manifestations are under the attributes of Thought and Extension, that is, as bodies and minds ; but that in no way limits God's nature to those two forms ; rather, being infinite, he has an infinite number of attributes.

That is a doctrine which is based on a spiritualistic monism. Still spiritualistic, but now no longer monistic but pluralistic, is the theory of Leibniz, who, against Spinoza's affirmation of one Absolute Reality which he identified with God, with its consequent reduction of the human mind to some rank lower than that of complete reality, demanded that the independence of the human soul be admitted, and to ensure it formulated and developed his doctrine of monads. He used the word 'monad' for the independent spiritual units which make up the scale of existence ; he avoided the word 'atom', for while the atom is extended, in space, and

(paradoxically enough) composed of parts, the monad is none of these ; but what the atom is to the materialist the monad is to the spiritual pluralist. The whole of the universe is composed of monads, simple individual spiritual substances, each of which follows out the course of its growth from an inner principle of development. For reasons which we shall soon see he refused to admit that any one monad had any interaction or any causal relation with any other ; each was, difficult though we may find it to appreciate, absolutely independent, existing in splendid isolation from its fellows, self-contained, self-developing, and self-realizing. The difficulties of Leibniz' system are many, as we shall see, but they seem to be inevitable if this fundamental principle is asserted. Everything we see or experience, or rather seem to see or experience, for nothing can have any real influence on anything else, is a monad or collection of monads. The worm beneath the sod, our apple, stones, trees, animals, human beings, angels, God, all are monads or colonies of monads, different indeed in their degree of activity, but all alike in their essence, all spiritual existences equally real and equally spiritual. They are alike in kind, their difference is one of degree. And they are all independent of each other, absolutely and literally isolated ; as he says, they have no windows through which activity may flow to them from others or to others from them.

Why did Leibniz lay so much stress on this independence ? To answer that question we shall have to go back to Descartes, and by the time we have given anything like a complete answer we shall have found that we must deal with the fundamental dualism of philosophy, the terrific cleavage which we find in Descartes, the utter separation of mind and matter. This separation was not the invention of Descartes ; indeed it is one of the signs of his connection with the traditions of the past that he retained it. It is natural for us to think, when

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we consider his revolutionary method of doubt, which caused so much trouble between him and the Church to which he belonged, and his general fearlessness of thought, that he is the great rebel, the type of free-thinker who glories in revolt. But this side of his genius can be exaggerated ; on every page of his writings is clear the desire to keep himself within the Church, to treat of all questions of theology and faith with humility and reverence, and to reject nothing except the unthinkable. And a proof of this is the enormous amount of doctrine that he took over bodily from the orthodox philosophy and theology of his day. Roughly it may be said that the official philosophy of the Catholic Church was then, as it is now, a development, on very conservative lines, of the philosophy of Aristotle. The views of Aquinas are those of Aristotle modified sufficiently, and no more, to admit of the inclusion of the necessary distinctively Christian doctrines which no religious philosopher could ignore. And when Descartes embodied these doctrines in his own philosophy and handed them on to his successors he did more than any other one man has done to hand on to modern European thought the traditional tenets of orthodox Aristotelianism. In our admiration for Descartes as a pioneer we must not overlook his value as an important link in a chain.

Perhaps the most important legacy he received from Aristotle, who in his turn had inherited it from the earliest of Greek philosophers, was just this distinction between mind and matter. To Plato matter was the untractable, the unintelligent and the unintelligible, the stuff which always got in the way when the free mind of man was seeking for knowledge. The human body, being material, was an encumbrance to true knowledge, and the aim of the philosopher should be to free himself as much as possible from this hindrance, to permit his spirit to wander freely in realms where its pure untrammelled apprehension could be matched by the

Forms or Ideas, equally free from contact with that which degraded their nature and prevented their full nature from being realized. This is the ancestor of the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, two utterly distinct and different kinds of existence, a dualism uncritically accepted by common-sense and assumed for practical purposes even by those who would shrink from accepting it as philosophically true. We know quite well what we mean by the material and the non-material in ordinary life. The material is that which has no mind, a chair, a table, a mountain, a stone, a book, a railway-engine ; they have in themselves no power of originating activity, no self-consciousness, no purpose. The non-material, on the other hand, is perhaps less definite, but still fairly clear, the human mind and other minds which are held to be of the same kind, whether lower, like those attributed to animals, or higher, like that attributed to God. But these are vague distinctions, and at bottom it seems that the difference between the mental and the non-mental, or, which is the same thing, between the material and the non-material, is simply this, that the material occupies space and the non-material does not. This is the clue to another formulation of the dualism, the one used by Spinoza, though used by him not as a description of reality, but simply to illustrate the ways in which his substance reveals itself to our experience. The material may be equated with the extended, and the non-material with thought ; and to Spinoza these two, Extension and Thought, are two among the infinite number of the attributes of God, but the only two of which we can have experience, for all that we know falls under one or other of these two heads, everything we can experience is either thought or extension, either mind or matter. Now if the distinction is admitted as philosophically true, if the common-sense distinction between these two forms of reality is admitted and both are accepted as equally real and substantial, an

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addition is made to our four previous views about the ultimate nature of substance. We saw that there were four possibilities, a materialistic monism, a materialistic pluralism, a spiritualistic monism and a spiritualistic pluralism. Now we have a fifth, which we may call a Common-sense Dualism, which recognizes that there are two wholly distinct but equally valid forms of existence, a material, exemplified in chairs and mountains, and a mental, exemplified in non-spatial things like the human mind. If this view can be substantiated we are relieved from the necessity, which is imposed on us by either of the other four views, of dismissing as unreal and insubstantial either on the one hand all that is material or on the other all that is spiritual. If this Dualism is genuine and valid we make the best of both worlds, deny nothing, and have the further satisfaction of agreeing with common sense. And all this is very attractive.

But we must see exactly what it is that we are affirming. There are two distinct kinds of real things, equally real : neither the distinctness nor the reality is more important, they are totally distinct and each is wholly real. If this were not so we should be imputing either to the material or to the spiritual some such priority as would compel us to accept one of our other four world-views. To take a simple example : I am real, by which it may be meant either that my body is real or that my mind is real or that my body-plus-mind is real ; for purposes of simplicity, since the relation between my body and my mind is more difficult than the relation between either and anything else, we will restrict the statement to the second of these possible meanings. And the apple is real, just as real as my mind. They exist side by side in a world which permits the equal and unrestricted existence of both. And that seems very sensible. But if we reflect we find that it is neither so easy nor so sensible as we had thought. These two

kinds of real things exist side by side and quite independently ; if not independently then they are not equally real, for the one must be able to act causally on the other. But what does it mean to be independent ? We saw that Leibniz was troubled by exactly this problem, and that he constructed his system to include monads which were so independent that not one of them could have either active or passive relations with another. He was compelled to make this assertion simply because of the dualism he had inherited from Descartes, the dualism which we are now considering. To be independent means to be entirely without relations to anything else, neither to act upon it nor to be acted upon, to cause nothing and to have nothing caused in one, to maintain a complete and utter indifference to the behaviour and existence and purpose of everything else whatever. And we ask if this independence is possible in the world of the mind-matter dualism. I look at the apple : what happens ? Common sense says that the apple causes in me certain sensations which I interpret in a certain way and conclude that that external object is an apple. And if it says this, common sense, at the very first step, denies part of the position which we have called Common-sense Dualism. For if the apple causes sensations in me, then it and I are not independent, we are in a causal relation, in which a certain effect follows in me from a certain cause or set of causes in it. And if this relation of activity on the part of the apple and passivity on the part of me the observer is a genuine one, the independence both of it and of me has broken down. We are no longer independent, the material apple has had some effect on my non-material mind, and whichever way round the activity and the passivity may be, certainly the two kinds of reality, mental and material, have come together in one experience and ceased to be utterly distinct and separate. This again may be said to be in complete accordance with common

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sense. ‘ You know quite well that this is what happens,’ it may be said, ‘ I do in fact see apples and mountains and railway-engines, the material does have some effect on the mental, why should you try or even want to deny it ? ’ The desire to deny it is irrelevant, except in so far as it is an assertion inconsistent with the dualism which common sense always assumes. It may be the truth that the mental is affected by the material as when I see an apple, or the material by the mental, as when I will to move my arm and move it, but if either of these events occurs, then the material and the mental are not utterly distinct and independent. There remains the still more awkward question how, even if this connection is admitted, it can possibly take place. How can the material cause produce a mental effect ? And if the mental is defined as the non-material and the material as the non-mental, the answer seems to be fairly clear, It cannot. If one half of reality is put on one side and the other half on the other, the one called the mental and the other called the material, each defined as the opposite of the other and between them a great gulf fixed, there is no hope whatever of interaction between them. Mind is mind and matter is matter, and never the twain shall meet. And whatever solution we may find of this Common-sense Dualism, at any rate it will not be the one that common sense itself has suggested.

### *Consult further :*

Descartes. ‘ Principles’, Bk. I.

Leibniz. ‘ Monadology’ (trans. Latta).

Locke. ‘ Essay concerning Human Understanding’, Bk. II.

## CHAPTER IV

### BRIDGING THE GULF

#### i. *Interaction*

The interaction of mind and matter is the fundamental problem of perception, and, therefore, since all knowledge begins with perception, of knowledge of all kinds. When we ask what happens when I look at an apple, what kind of knowledge I have, and how far it is valid, we are simply asking, though we may not always recognize it, How does matter influence mind? Once we have got the two kinds of existence apart, how do we ever get them together again? If matter and mind are distinct, how can I ever see an apple? This dualism, which seems to rest on such reliable evidence, the evidence of our senses and of all our prejudices, dies hard; and the history of philosophy since Descartes is a history of attempts which have been made to overcome the difficulties which it involves. To deny the dualism altogether leads us back to one or other of our four previous forms of theory. That, of course, is no condemnation, though it implies the denial of full reality either to matter or to mind, but inasmuch as we are trying to deal with common sense we must try to find some form of theory less paradoxical than one which involves either of these denials. The Common-sense Dualism is the only view that attempts to affirm the equal reality of both; the great difficulty is to explain how, if the two kinds of reality are quite distinct, any interaction between them is possible. And any attempts which are made to bridge this gulf will be attempts to establish the dualism as philosophically sound.

*ii. Representative Perception*

The ordinary and historical way of bridging the gulf is the doctrine of Representative Perception, which was held by Descartes and has been believed by many of the more strictly scientific system-builders of later times. This theory starts, it must be remembered, from the position that mind and matter are totally distinct but equally real ; so, when I look at a lamp-shade I cannot see the actual physical lamp-shade which exists in space outside me, because it is material, while my mind, with which I do my perceiving and experiencing, is non-material. The only thing which the mind is capable of perceiving is something of the same nature as itself, something, that is, which is not material but mental. So, on this theory, what the mind perceives is not the lamp-shade, but a mental idea of the lamp-shade, an idea which is in the mind and at the same time represents the physical thing which is necessarily incapable of being perceived by a non-material mind.

Or, if we analyse the act of perceiving the lamp-shade, we find that what happens is somewhat as follows. From the lamp-shade, which is material, there flows light reflected to my eyes ; this causes a chain of quite material events to take place in my nervous system which ultimately ends in the brain, still in material shape. But I have not yet perceived the lamp-shade : I can perceive nothing of this chain of material causes and effects, simply because it is material. But this material chain arouses (it cannot be said to cause, for that is the whole question at issue) a mental idea, which, of course, my mind is capable of perceiving, and which represents the physical and material lamp-shade. The mental idea which I perceive represents the physical thing which I cannot perceive.

Now there are two quite obvious objections to this view. The first is so obvious as to be childish : How

do you know that the idea which alone you can perceive does in any way or degree represent the material thing which you cannot perceive? You can know nothing about the material thing except, apparently, by means of the idea; how, then, can you tell that the idea has any resemblance to the thing at all? How can you know, that is, when you perceive a mental idea of lamp-shade, that there is a material lamp-shade before your eyes? Why may it not really be a tea-tray or an elephant? So long as my perceptions are confined to the ideas which are in or before my mind, it does seem to be rather difficult for me to compare those ideas with anything else. Descartes' only defence against this objection was an appeal to the veracity and beneficence of God, another example of his orthodoxy and traditionalism. God is a good God and would not deceive me into thinking that there was a lamp-shade there if it really were an elephant. God guarantees that my ideas represent the external things. Why, then, we ask in return, are you ever deceived? Why, on this view of God's goodness, does anybody ever make a mistake about anything? Where, in short, does error come in? If God is a good God and no deceiver, the difficulty is not to see how we are ever right in our perceptions, but, on the other hand, how we are ever wrong.

The second objection strikes even deeper. It is simply this, that the account of the act of perception which is given by this doctrine of Representative Perception really explains nothing at all. The difficulty which it was constructed to overcome was this, how a material object could have a causal influence on a mind which is by definition of a nature wholly different from it. The mind can perceive nothing material, it can perceive only the mental idea which, on this view, is awakened or called up by the train of physical and material causes and effects which follow on the entrance of rays of light reflected from the material thing into the eye. But just

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at the crucial point the theory breaks down. The mental idea is said to be awakened or aroused or called up by the action of a succession of physical causes ; it cannot openly be said to be caused by them, for it is just the possibility of such a causal connection between mind and matter that is the question in dispute. And yet what is this ‘awakening’ or ‘calling up’ but an effect in the mind of a chain of material causes and effects in the body ? Either the physical chain has a causal connection with the mental idea, or it has not : if it has not, no explanation has been offered of how the subject, confronted with a material lamp-shade, perceives it : if it has, and the succession of physical changes from the eye to the brain causes the mental idea, then the possibility of matter’s acting on mind is admitted and we might just as well say to begin with that the mind is capable of apprehending the material lamp-shade, and abolish as a quite useless complication the mediation of chains of physical causes and mental ideas of any kind. For to say that the rays of light and consequent physical motions can cause a mental idea is no less to assert the possibility of mind being affected by matter than if the mind perceives the lamp-shade straight away and face to face.

How in detail Descartes saw the situation is uncertain and, at present, irrelevant. There is no doubt that this is his general form of explanation of the act of perception ; and he goes further than he has any right to go in attempting to bridge the gulf which split his whole universe. In explaining the act of perception he is saved by a confusion between two entirely different meanings of the word ‘idea’. The gulf between the material and the mental is present throughout his whole explanation ; and he only succeeds in getting across because, in Greek idiom, he escapes his own notice deceiving himself. The apple, in our old example, is physical and material, my mind is non-material : how does the one become conscious of the other ? Descartes

says, reasonably enough, on the lines of the doctrine of Representative Perception, that the strictly material apple starts a train of motions in my strictly material nerves ; the material eye is affected by material rays of light reflected from a material apple, and a series of agitations passes from my eye along strictly material nerves until it reaches my strictly material brain. Here there is formed a strictly material impression, sometimes called a species or image, but more often called the material idea. But I still have not perceived the apple ; for what I perceive with my mind when I perceive, as I say, the apple, is not the actual physical apple on the table, but my mental idea of the apple. This must be the case, because if it were not so the non-material part of me, the mind, would be perceiving something material, the apple, and this is impossible in view of the utter distinctness of material and non-material. On this point Descartes is quite clear. What my mind perceives is my mental idea ; but so far, from the physical side, we have got no further than the physical idea in the brain. What is the connection between the physical idea, which is material, and the mental idea, which is non-material ? The one is on one side of the gulf and the other on the other ; how is contact established ? By Descartes it is established, knowingly or not, simply by a confusion of words : both the material idea in the brain and the mental idea before the mind are called by the same name, 'idea', and, unconsciously it must be, he talks of them as interchangeable and ultimately the same. He has passed from the material to the mental, across the yawning gulf, on a flimsy bridge composed of the one word 'idea', without realizing that however far he may build out from the physical side and however far he may build out from the mental side, his constructions can never meet, for the physical remains physical and the mental mental, and by their very natures they are on different planes and must refuse to unite.

Another side of this same confusion may be seen in Descartes' anxiety to find one definite place in the body which might be called the particular residence of the mind. He decides<sup>1</sup> that the soul or mind resides not in the heart, nor in the whole brain, but in the pineal gland or conarium, the innermost part of the brain, a unique spot where the double images of the two eyes or the double messages of the two hands may be fused into one before they come before the mind. Here the soul is present in a more intimate way than anywhere else in the body, and here it exercises its functions specially and immediately. But how can what is not extended be located in any one definite place? And how does the mind become conscious, in the pineal gland or elsewhere, of what should still be material? Or are we to suppose that the transformation from material to mental is in fact effected, in some inexplicable way, by the operation of the pineal gland itself?

In this unsatisfactory state Descartes left the question of the causal connection between matter and mind: and indeed the question, 'How does a material apple cause a mental change?' is said to be bequeathed to his successors as the cardinal difficulty in his philosophy. What those successors made of it we have now to enquire.

### *iii. Occasionalism*

It is by now unnecessary to repeat that mind and matter were thought of as distinct and separate. The followers of Descartes faced this problem quite honestly, and came to the very reasonable conclusion that if mind and matter were by nature distinct, anything like direct causal connection between them was impossible. It is impossible, that is, for an apple which is wholly and completely physical to have any direct effect whatever on a mind which is wholly and solely non-physical.

<sup>1</sup> 'De Passionibus Animae', §§ 31, 32.

And yet this connection certainly seems to exist every time I perceive through my senses any fragment of the external world. How can this be? The answer of Descartes' immediate successors is one that has earned for them the name of Occasionalists.

This is a theory which has suffered even more than most philosophical views from misinterpretation, and for the sake of fairness no less than of clearness it will perhaps be best to state the ordinary interpretation and usual criticisms of the doctrine before going on to examine both the doctrine and the criticisms a little more carefully. The ordinary statement<sup>1</sup> of the Occasionalist view is somewhat as follows. Mind does not affect matter, nor does matter affect mind; such a connection between two mutually exclusive substances is inconceivable. Neither can cause any change in the other. But the change seems to take place; by what power is it caused if not by the particular mind or the particular matter before us? And the answer of the Occasionalists is quite simple, 'God.' They meant this quite literally. When they said that God was the cause of all changes in the world, mental or material, they did not mean that God was in some vague way responsible for everything, the controller to whom everything can ultimately be traced back; they meant a great deal more than this. They meant, in the strictest sense, that whenever a motion takes place in the mental world or in the material world it serves simply as the occasion, hence the name of the theory, for the intervention of God in the other world, whichever it may be, to produce a change corresponding to that motion. If I will to move my arm, for instance, there is no direct connection between that willing and the actual movement of my physical arm; there can be no such connection between two disparate

<sup>1</sup> As, for example, in Taylor's 'Elements of Metaphysics', pp. 184 ff., and Höffding's 'Brief History of Modern Philosophy', p. 54.

forms of existence ; but my willing is the signal for the intervention of God, who is the only actual cause of anything, to produce in the physical world the change which will correspond to my willing, but which, without some means of bridging the gulf between mind and matter, could never be actualized. God is the cause of everything, and events in either order of existence, mental or material, are the occasions for his intervention in the other : this is Occasionalism.

For four reasons, it is objected, it is an unsatisfactory issue out of our afflictions. In the first place it demands, as Leibniz objected to it, a perpetual miracle. For God, having created two orders of Nature, fixed and irreconcilably apart, spends all his time putting them together again, in a quite miraculous and wholly unnatural union. To appeal to the omnipotence of God to remedy a situation which he himself has created is neither intelligent nor respectful. And the miracle is necessarily arbitrary. It is very remarkable, on a little reflection, that this miracle so often succeeds in getting itself achieved without mistakes. It is very odd that when I will to move my left arm God does not by accident move my left leg, or somebody else's left arm ; or that when a red apple is in front of me I see a red apple and not a white cart-horse. Or, if God is omnipotent and therefore these mistakes could not occur, we must ask again the question we asked of Descartes, Why am I sometimes mistaken ? Why is the miracle, if usually efficient, not always so ? The regularity with which the miracle is usually performed is a tribute less to the efficiency of the only cause than to the simplicity of the minds which could suppose it possible.

But there is a second objection. Our difficulty is to get from A, a point in the mental world, to B, a point in the material world ; and the Occasionalist, finding that a gulf prevents him from going straight along the line AB, goes round by C, God. The fact that we have

to go a long way round to reach our destination should not set us against the theory, for the longest way round is more often the shortest way home in philosophy than it is in ordinary life. But if we reflect, we find that we do not in fact simply go from A to C, on a mental line, and then from C to B on a physical line, for, if we did that, we should, when we were at C, be both physical and mental at once. What we really do is to go from A to C, on a mental line, and then from C' to B on a physical line ; and to conceal the fact that we have to change at C, which is on the mental line, to C', which is on the physical, we include both these points in the one name God, and think thereby to solve the problem, whereas strictly we have done exactly what Descartes did. He bridged the gulf by a confusion of two meanings in the same word : we bridge the gulf by a conflation of two mutually exclusive points into one, to which we give the name God.

Thirdly, an objection which is simply the technical statement of the trouble which we have represented diagrammatically in our second objection, the attempted solution, so far from solving our problem, simply presents us with the same problem twice over. For we are attempting to explain how the mental can cause a change in the physical ; and we have maintained that it cannot, that nothing can cause a change but God. And yet, if a given act of will is to be the occasion of God's action in the world of matter, we have two acts of causation to explain, first the causal effect of my act of will on the mind of God, and secondly, the causal effect of God's action on my left arm. We are in twice as difficult a position as we were to begin with, for we have two causal connections to explain, one on God and one by God. And, moreover, we have to reconcile this with the position that the only causal agent in the universe is God ; yet God is acted upon by my will when I will to raise my arm and he raises it for me. I am causing

in God a state of his mind, and from that emerges the physical action of God in moving my left arm. The situation is exactly similar if the action be in the reverse direction, if an apple or a blackbird eating a worm causes a perception of itself to appear in my mind. To introduce God as a misnomer for two mutually exclusive points, or as an automatic telephone exchange, cannot be the solution of the problem of the interrelation of mind and matter.

Fourthly, it is objected that the Occasionalists took away from their theory any value it might have had by refusing, or omitting, to apply it to *all* cases of causal connection. They are accused of sticking fast in the relation of mind to matter and of matter to mind. They did not realize that to explain the mutual interaction of two pieces of matter or of two minds is just as difficult as to explain how matter affects mind or mind matter. They ignored entirely the problem of how one billiard ball in motion makes to move another stationary ball which it touches ; and, equally, they ignored the problem of how one mind can, without any material mediation, influence another. These problems they made no attempt to solve, and so they left their theory not only ludicrous as far as it went but quite inadequate to the problems it should have attempted to solve.

That is the accepted interpretation of Occasionalism, and if it is a true statement there can be no doubt that the Occasionalists were either very naïve or very stupid people. But a reading of the Seventh of the Dialogues on Metaphysics of Malebranche suggests that it is perhaps not quite an accurate, certainly not a very charitable, account of the doctrine as held at least by him, and he was the chief of its exponents. The fourth objection can be answered very briefly. It is said that 'It is a mere prejudice when Geulincx and Malebranche allow themselves to assume that the sequence of physical change on preceding physical change, or mental change

on preceding mental change, is more self-explanatory than the sequence of a mental change on a physical'.<sup>1</sup> That in itself is a statement which might well be disputed ; it may seem easier to explain how one billiard ball makes another move than to explain how I lift my arm. However that may be, this particular prejudice, if it be one, can hardly be said to be one from which Malebranche suffered, when he spends a good deal of time and trouble in discussing what happens when one moving ball comes into contact with another, what the relation between them is, what the law of the conservation of energy implies, and what connection God has with the event. And he treats this problem in exactly the same way as he treats the other, that of the relation between mind and matter.

The real mistake, if such a crude word may be allowed, which underlies the whole of this ordinary interpretation, is contained in the words,<sup>2</sup> 'What Geulinex and Malebranche really had in mind was the simple reflection that we cannot tell *how* a physical change can bring about a mental change, or *vice versa*.' It seems, on the contrary, that what Malebranche at any rate had in mind was something quite different. It is *not* apparent that his first concern was with the Cartesian Dualism at all. Of course, he would have been glad to find some reasonable solution of its difficulties ; what devout and faithful follower of Descartes would not ? But the whole tone and emphasis of Malebranche's writings suggests that the dualism which he recognizes and tries to account for is not the dualism between matter on the one hand and mind on the other, but a very different one between God on the one hand and all created things, material or mental, on the other. The difference between the Creator and his creatures is far greater than any differences there could possibly be between one creature and another.

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 187. <sup>2</sup> Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 186, his italics.

There are discernible, in Malebranche's Seventh Dialogue, two principles, both of great importance, which serve as signposts on the high-road of philosophy, showing us the way from Descartes to, on the one hand, Spinoza, and, on the other hand, Hume. Both principles are to be found in Descartes, both are in Malebranche ; and it was the emphasis on the one and the neglect of the other that led on one side to the Absolutism of Spinoza, and on the other to the view of Hume that consciousness exists only in isolated moments, between which there is no connection except that which the mind mysteriously imparts. It is not, of course, suggested that Spinoza and Hume both read Malebranche and decided what of his doctrine should survive and what be rejected ; Spinoza, in fact, was dead before Malebranche's ' Dialogues ' appeared, but this is a useful example of the way in which thinkers can include in their systems elements which seem to them compatible, but which lead, on examination, in directions wholly different.

The first of these principles is derived directly from Descartes, and points straight to Hume. It was one of Descartes' methods of proving the existence of God that all of us, being created and mortal, depend for our existence on the existence of a Creator who made us ; further, our continued existence depends on the continued existence and activity of the Creator on whom we all depend. It is not enough that we should simply be created, once and for all, we must be conserved. Descartes' statement, in the Third Meditation, is this<sup>1</sup> : ' The whole time of my life may be divided into an infinity of parts, each of which is in no way dependent on any other ; and, accordingly, because I was in existence a short time ago, it does not follow that I must now exist, unless in this moment some cause create me anew as it were, that is, conserve me. In truth, it

<sup>1</sup> Veitch's translation, p. 129.

is perfectly clear and evident to all who will attentively consider the nature of duration, that the conservation of a substance, in each moment of its duration, requires the same power and act that would be necessary to create it, supposing it were not yet in existence.' Malebranche says, 'Your house continues to exist, though its architect be dead. That is because the foundations are solid and because it has no connection with the life of him who built it. It does not depend on him in any way. The ground of our being, on the other hand, depends essentially on the Creator. . . . The universe depends so much upon the universal cause that it would relapse into not-being necessarily if God ceased to conserve it. For God does not will, and indeed cannot make, a created thing which is independent of His volitions.' That is the first principle, and it is not difficult to see how it applies to the causal interaction between created things. *This* is the 'perpetual miracle' which Leibniz and less justified commentators throw in the teeth of the Occasionalists ; the perpetual miracle is not the remarkable fact that when I will to move my left arm God intervenes in the physical order and moves my left arm and not my right leg ; the perpetual miracle is the continuously-repeated act of creation. Now, if God is continuously and incessantly creating the world, what is it that is happening when I will to move my arm ? Simply, it seems, this, that at one instant there is a world in which I am willing so to act, and at the next instant there is a world in which my action is taking place. There is no causal connection between the two ; God has created both, in successive instants. Both depend on him, the only Cause ; for, as Malebranche says, 'The Creator alone can be the mover, only He who gives being to bodies can put them in the places which they occupy.' The universe is, in fact, a cinematograph film, consisting of an infinite number of stationary positions : on the film itself, as in the universe itself,

there is no motion at all, there is only a succession of isolated positions each having no connection with the position immediately preceding or the position immediately succeeding. It is only when the film is moved that motion seems to take place : so, it is only when the universe is seen against a background of time that motion, change and causal connection seem to take place. and this view of the nature of causation and existence is strangely like that which was later taken by David Hume.

The second principle, which points towards Spinoza, is, in Malebranche's words, 'the greatest, most fruitful and necessary of all principles, namely, that God communicates His power to created beings only because He has made their modifications the occasional causes of the effects which He produces in Himself'. That is a memorable sentence. It contains the unfortunate phrase 'occasional causes', which has brought Malebranche and his views into such disrepute ; but it is plain from what he says in the other passages which have been quoted that he uses the word 'cause' in this connection to mean 'what is generally or popularly called a cause'. Cause to him could only mean God ; God actually does everything that happens in the world, not merely in the sense of being the First Cause, the original reason why anything exists at all, but in the sense of being the Efficient Cause, the actual reason why everything happens which does happen. Further, and this is the connection with Spinoza, God produces my willing to move my left arm no less than he produces what we call the effect of my willing, namely, the actual movement of my arm. Everything is caused by God, both the mental cause, so-called, and the physical effect, so-called. It is merely arbitrary to say that God intervenes to produce a physical effect to correspond to my mental willing ; for God, who causes everything, clearly causes me to will just as much as he causes my arm to move. That is the answer

to the criticism that Occasionalism introduces the irrational notion of my will determining the will of God to interfere in the physical order. Professor Taylor says<sup>1</sup>: ‘Changes in either order definitely determine the intervention of God to originate definitely determined changes in the other order.’ But God himself causes the change in my mental state exactly as much as he causes the change in the physical order of Nature. Preoccupied with the dualism of mind and matter, critics are in danger of overlooking what is really a much more fundamental dualism, the dualism between God on the one side as the only mover of anything that is moved and on the other both mind and matter, as created and movable things. And if God produces all these determinations, mental and material alike, as the occasions of ‘the effects which He produces in Himself’, it is a very small step to Spinoza’s view that God is the only real Substance, who manifests himself by producing changes and motions in the two parallel but quite distinct orders of mind and matter, or under his two attributes of Thought and Extension. Indeed, in Descartes himself this view is implicit when he defines Substance as that which exists in such a way as to need nothing else for its existence.

Whether or not Occasionalism is a tenable view it is for each individual to decide, but at least it should be realized that it is not quite so useless or so stupid as the usual account of it might lead us to suppose.

#### iv. *Pre-established Harmony*

At all events, Leibniz was not satisfied with it, rather, it may be hazarded, because he saw its Spinozistic tendencies than for the reasons which are normally given, the perpetual miracle involved, and the like. His own views are difficult and often obscure, but certain of them are interesting and relevant to our present consideration.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

His fundamental principle is different from that of Occasionalism : he reverts to the problem of Descartes' dualism. To him it seemed that if matter and mind are completely and hopelessly disparate they can never meet ; but in actual fact they do seem to meet, and, granted that some connection between what we call mind and what we call matter does occur, then they cannot be the totally distinct matter and mind we have inherited from Descartes, they must be capable of entering into relations with each other, and they must therefore be substantially the same. If they are different in kind, they cannot enter into relations ; but they do enter into relations, therefore they are not different in kind. And if they are not different in kind they must be the same ; and if they are the same, they must both be what we call matter or both what we call mind. This is simply another way of arriving at a conclusion which we have mentioned before, that there are not two kinds of reality, mind and matter, but one ; and whether that be mind or matter we have not yet discovered.

To Leibniz it was mind. He was what we have previously called a Spiritual Pluralist ; that is, he believed that there was a plurality of real existing substances, all of which were spiritual, to which he gave the name of monads. Since the universe was composed of an infinite number of monads and nothing whatever besides, and since these monads were completely non-material, there could be no matter. And since there was no matter there could be no problem of the relation of matter and mind. But there could very well be, and there was, the general problem of interaction between two separate and distinct monads. Leibniz' monads, as we have said before, were independent, strictly and rigorously so, as far apart from each other as any Cartesian ever held matter to be from mind. How, being independent, could they have relations with each other ? Would not the fact of causal or any other connection between two

monads destroy their independence ? It would, and Leibniz saw that it would. So he denies that any monad has any influence whatever on any other, there is no channel through which influence could come in or go out. But he does not deny that it looks very much, in ordinary life, as if things do influence each other ; in fact, he asserts that while from the nature of the monads interaction is impossible, they behave *as if* such interaction took place. But he does not appeal to the continuous creation by God to explain appearances : he has a theory which may appear fantastic and, ultimately, no improvement on the Occasionalism it hopes to supersede, the theory of Pre-established Harmony, which in brief is this. When God created the universe of an infinite number of monads he chose that they should behave in such a way that while each was independent of all the others it was in a fixed place in the scale of being, and all its actions, thoughts, perceptions and volitions were the outcome of the nature bestowed on it by God at the first moment of its existence. But to explain the fact that when I prick my finger (an example, incidentally, which he borrowed from Malebranche) I feel pain, he held that any change in any one monad was accompanied by a corresponding change in all the other monads which constitute the universe. It is not the case that a change in one monad is accompanied by a change in one or two others, for such limited changes would throw out the arrangement in a continuous scale which is the essence of the monadic system. Any change in any monad *causes* no change at all in any other monad ; but as the result of the harmony pre-established by God between all the monads of the universe any change in any one is accompanied by a corresponding change in all others, so that any action, however insignificant, is accompanied by a change in the whole nature of universal reality.

This explanation may seem fantastic, and the independ-

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ence which he is trying to guarantee to his monads hardly worth the price. And there are obvious flaws and inconsistencies in the system as a whole. How can a monad which has no windows mirror the universe, as he says it does ? How can the colossal act of causation performed by God when he created the universe reasonably be made the basis of a system which seeks to do away with causation altogether ? Is it any better to get this great miracle over at the beginning than to repeat it from moment to moment with the Occasionists ? Can we conceive an infallible harmony established at the creation of the universe and exemplified at every moment since ? And if we can, does not a pre-established harmony necessarily imply predestination and rigid determinism in all we do, absence of free-will in human action, and complete fatalism ? These are all awkward questions for the disciple of Leibniz, but let us not forget his value in pointing out his defects. He emphasizes several important suggestions. First, he maintains that the universe is composed of beings all the same in kind, differing only in degree of what we may call conscious purpose. We may find it difficult to recognize purpose in what is called inorganic nature, and even in the lower forms of organic life ; what is the conscious purpose of a mountain, a piece of seaweed, or a tennis-racket, or indeed of a worm or a hedgehog ? But to say that we find it difficult to recognize their purposes is by no means to deny that they have purposes ; it would be singularly unphilosophical to conclude from our ignorance of their purposes that they had none. And the assertion of the essential kinship of God, ourselves and a railway-bridge is a salutary lesson alike for the over-humble and the over-presumptuous. Secondly, he emphasizes that these substances are not material but spiritual, a statement on which we need not linger. And thirdly, he denies the reality of the causal connection not between matter and mind, for for him this

problem does not arise, but between mind and mind, that is, between any two of his real substances. They behave *as if* they had a causal relation with each other, but in fact they are only related as independent members of the harmony pre-established by God.

*Consult further :*

- Norman Kemp Smith. ‘Prolegomena to an Idealist Theory of Knowledge’, esp. chaps. II, III, IV.  
Malebranche. ‘Dialogues on Metaphysics’ (trans. Ginsberg).  
Leibniz. ‘New Essays concerning Human Understanding.’

## CHAPTER V

### CAUSATION

#### i. *The Causal Principle*

We must now turn from the particular causal relation between matter and mind to consider the causal connection in general. The causal principle, as it is called, is a commonplace of practical and scientific affairs. We naturally assume, both in practice and in science, that everything that happens has a cause, and that given the same conditions the same causes will produce the same effects. This is a perfectly normal and quite useful assumption, and so long as no other claims are made for it we have no complaint to make. It is when claims are made for it beyond that it is useful, when these statements are said to be in some way really true, that our difficulties as philosophers begin.

Let us take a quite ordinary instance of a chain of cause and effect, using indiscriminately factors in both the mental and the physical worlds. I am cold ; I decide to light a fire, relying on my belief that a fire will cause heat and so cause me to feel less cold ; I rub a specially-prepared piece of wood along a certain kind of paper, causing it to light and burn ; I apply this to paper and wood ; the fire burns, causing the room and me to become warmer, until I am overcome by drowsiness and fall asleep in my chair in front of the fire, a lapse which I might say was due to the warmth of the room. That is an ordinary chain of cause and effect, in which each item (except the first) is itself at the same time the effect of the one before, and the cause

of the one after. A causes B which causes C which causes D and so on in an unbroken chain. And if I wanted to produce the same sequence again I should be able to do so, assuming that the conditions in which I am working are constant, by performing the first act of the series ; the rest would then follow.

## ii. *Priority and Contiguity*

Now what exactly do we mean when we say that A causes B ? Hume, to whose analysis of the idea of causation all treatments of this question look back, emphasizes two factors at least which we demand in a cause ; it must be contiguous to the effect and it must precede it in time. That is, it must touch it in space and it must be before it in time. It must be contiguous because we cannot have what is called action at a distance ; if a given cause seems to have an effect distant from it in space it must always be capable of being traced through an intervening series of positions until finally what actually causes the effect is seen to be contiguous to it. If an orchestra playing in London produces an effect on the ears and mind of a listener in Manchester, by means of wireless transmission, we explain nothing by saying that this almost incredibly distant causal connection is really action at a distance ; we must be able to trace the separate steps of the occurrence, or else it remains a miracle, and irrational. To some of us it is almost a miracle that such an event should take place, but it is not quite a miracle, for we believe that there is a rational explanation if only we were sufficiently acquainted with the particular science involved to understand how at such a distance and in such a fraction of time the causal chain is completed. In our earlier example contiguity is easier to understand. If I hold the match-flame ten yards from the fireplace the paper and the wood do not burn ; before the effect, fire, follows from the cause, lighted match, the lighted match must touch the paper.

And the priority in time of the cause to the effect is equally plain, and equally involved in the notion of causation. It is inconceivable that the effect should precede the cause ; the flame is not present on the end of the match until I rub it along the sandpaper ; the room does not get hot until I have lit the fire and a certain amount of time has elapsed ; I am not overcome by drowsiness, let it be granted, until the room is warmed.

But behind these apparently indispensable and innocent facts, of contiguity and priority in time of cause to effect, there lies, on reflection, a mass of difficult problems. Let us take the latter first. The cause must be prior in time to the effect, for if it is not it becomes impossible to separate the one from the other and label the one distinctively 'cause' and the other 'effect'. But if it is prior in time then it is not solely responsible for the effect. If we say that A is the cause of B, but that it requires a lapse of time as well before B occurs, which is what we do say if we assert the temporal priority of A to B, then the cause of B is not A, but A plus a given lapse of time. And here at once we are in difficulties. For apart from denying our previous assertion, that A is the cause of B, we have also to decide whether or not it is a definite, specified lapse of time, and if so, how much. We say, for instance, that the playing of an orchestra in London plus a lapse of time, in this case almost unbelievably small, causes the effect, of pleasurable listening, in Manchester ; but we may equally say that the combined natures and habits of my ancestors plus a lapse of time, in this case quite large, have produced me. With the introduction of the lapse of time between A and B we introduce an element of irrationality which we can neither explain nor ignore. In any case, we have in the idea of A plus a lapse of time, all the difficulties involved in the ideas of empty space and empty time, difficulties which apply equally to the conditions of priority and contiguity. If A is called the cause of B

it must be contiguous and prior in time. But if it is prior in time there must be a gap, a piece of empty time, between it and B: just as, if it is contiguous, there must be a gap of empty space between it and B. If there is not, they must be in the same place, in which case they are not two things but one, and A cannot be called the cause of B. If A is separated from B by a lapse of empty time through which A has to move to get to B, of two things one, either it jumps the gap and arrives at B, in which case it is no longer A and therefore not the cause of B, or it can never get to B, because if it approaches B there will still always be another, though smaller, gap between them, and so on, with the gap always diminishing but never quite vanished. It is, so far as space is concerned, Zeno's old trouble of the flying arrow or of Achilles and the tortoise, and, so far as time is concerned, the trouble of any continuous series. A series which is continuous or compact (we may use the words as synonymous though mathematicians distinguish between them) is one in which there is always the possibility of inserting another term between any two given terms, for instance the series of rational numbers. Between 1 and 2 we can insert  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and 2,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ , between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $1\frac{5}{8}$ , and so on, indefinitely. And if we start at 0 and try to get to 1 by adding  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ , and so on, we never shall arrive. This infinite regress, better called an indefinite regress, meets us whenever we try to get from one point to another in a continuous series. And it meets us very forcibly if we try to get from A to B in our continuous chain of causation.

In a still more disturbing manner the indefinite regress meets us when we consider A, the alleged cause of B. What is A? We know that, since everything has a cause, besides being the cause of B it is itself the effect of something else, which we will call Z. By what right then do we single out A and give it the name of cause

of B when it is itself the effect of Z? The cause of B is not A, not even, as we saw we had to say, A plus a lapse of time; but the cause of B is A, and the cause of A, Z, and the cause of Z, Y, and the cause of Y, and so on backwards, until there is no hope of discovering the cause of B at all. There is no point ever at which we can stop; there is no point, that is, where we can say that this thing A, singly and alone, caused this other thing B. For to say that is to say that A itself was without a cause.

### iii. *First Cause*

This is precisely what is said by those philosophers and theologians who talk about a First Cause, by which the theologians at any rate mean God. There is evidence enough, it is argued, in the world as we know it, of the causal principle; there is change and flux everywhere. But how did it all begin? Who first started the movement? There must have been a beginning, sometime and somewhere, of the development and growth which have produced the present state of the universe, and if, as we have seen reason to suspect, it is impossible to label any one event *the cause* of any other without involving ourselves in an indefinite regress, that original cause must itself be uncaused, without antecedents, the very first activity in the universe.

This is another instance of the orthodoxy of Descartes, that he tried to prove the existence of God by this traditional argument, for it is derived, in substance, from Aristotle. He claims that he himself exists and, as we have seen, that he is conserved from moment to moment; he is aware that he has not caused his own existence and does not cause his own continuance; he is caused, and his existence is contingent on the existence of something or somebody else possessing sufficient causal power to create and conserve him. He might be said to have been caused by his parents, but they do not conserve

him, neither is their own existence, ultimately, any less contingent than his own, for they too were caused and are conserved. So however far back he traces his descent from mortal and finite ancestors he is no nearer to a solution of the problem of how and when this causal sequence began. He is therefore led to assert that since he and other finite and contingent beings exist, and since no amount of historical or pre-historical research will conduct him to anything which will serve as an adequate ground for these indubitable existences, there must be one original Cause, different in kind from them, itself uncaused, infinite and not contingent on anything but necessary. And this cause he calls God.

As a proof of the existence of God this argument is worthless until and unless it can be demonstrated first, that this assumed and rather shadowy cause possesses the attributes which Christianity demands in its God ; and, secondly, that at a certain point the finite chain of causes and effects passes over into the infinite. But the argument itself, even apart from its theological bearing, suffers from a grave weakness. It starts, let it be remembered, from the affirmation that anything which happens, in this case the existence of Descartes, must have a cause ; and it proceeds on that view, trying to find, in his physical antecedents, the cause of his being. But at a certain point the chain which is being traced backwards is, quite arbitrarily, assumed to begin, to have a first link. That is, the causal principle, having been used as the foundation of the enquiry and the instrument with which it has been conducted, is suddenly abandoned, and instead of continuing to say that everything which happens has a cause, the argument says quite the contrary, namely that there is one existence, person or activity which has no cause, which is the first or uncaused cause. And this is illegitimate. We cannot argue, on the strength of the causal principle, that everything has a cause, and then suddenly assert that there is something

which has no cause ; whether the causal principle is valid or not, it cannot be used for part of the time and then discarded in this arbitrary way. Either everything which happens has a cause or it has not ; the assumption throughout this argument is that it has ; how, then, can there be an uncaused cause, or an uncaused anything ?

#### iv. *Totality of Conditions*

It seems, then, that the attempt to call any one thing *the cause* of any other thing must be abandoned. And for this idea of a single cause has been substituted the notion that the cause of a thing is the whole of the circumstances which are necessary to bring it into being, the totality of the conditions that its existence demands. In our previous simple case, before I can light my fire the wood and the paper must have been properly prepared, the fireplace suitably built and cleaned, the chimney swept, and the right kind of coal put on ; also, in another direction, my match must be dry, tipped with the necessary substance, and brought into contact with the surface of the sandpaper ; again, to produce the match, as we were taught in geography lessons at school, all the commercial machinery of the world is brought into action. If any single one of these conditions is not fulfilled I shall be unable even to set in motion the very simple train of causes and effects by which I hope to make myself less cold. It is therefore easy to see how vast are the converging streams of causes and effects which unite to produce any actual present effect, however trifling. Would it then not be quite permissible to say that the cause of any given effect is the totality of the conditions which it presupposes and demands ? It would be valid enough, for practical or ordinary scientific purposes, but if the truth of the statement is in question we must notice its limitations.

The first is one which we have mentioned before, that we cannot with any real meaning talk of the sum

of an infinite series. That means, in the present case, that however much we may talk of the totality of conditions required to produce our given effect we are always omitting one very important condition, the lapse of time, however small, between state A and state B, or, in this case, between the occurrence of the totality of the conditions W, X, Y, Z, A, and the so-called effect B. The mere name, totality of conditions, brings us no nearer to a solution of this very awkward difficulty than we were with our more primitive view of one cause for one effect.

But, further, if we really attempt to find the totality of the conditions of an event we rapidly find ourselves unable to distinguish effect from cause. If an event is caused by the totality of the conditions which it demands, it is caused by the sum of all its relations with everything else in the universe which is precedent to or contemporary with it. If we limit these conditions to those which precede it we are back in our old difficulty with the lapse of time ; if we say that we mean all the events which are contemporary with it, we find ourselves unable to distinguish not only the causes of the event from other events which we call irrelevant, but the event itself from its so-called causes. The event which we are trying to account for becomes one element in a closely-interwoven but quite instantaneous cross-section of the world's history, and can be said to be caused by its surroundings in exactly the same way as a particular piece of colour in a picture can be said to be caused by the whole pattern of which it is a part. And that is a very different relation from the one we set out to establish.

#### v. *Necessary Connection*

We have mentioned two of the conditions which Hume demanded of an event before he could give to it the title of cause of another event, priority in time and contiguity

in space. But these two by themselves are not adequate, as a very little reflection will show, to sustaining the burden. Night, in every observed case, follows day in any place, but we do not therefore call night the cause of day. If I see, in my lifetime, one total eclipse of the sun, and it is immediately preceded by the blowing of the whistle of a railway-engine, I do not conclude that the blowing of the whistle caused the eclipse, although in all the cases of total eclipses which I have seen or am likely to see this event has preceded the other. I may often have heard the whistle of an engine without seeing an eclipse ; but I have often seen a cricketer try to hit a ball and miss it. When he does hit it I am entitled to think that he is in some way responsible for the event ; and I am neither less nor more entitled to hold the engine whistle responsible for the eclipse, in spite of its frequent failure to produce such an event. We are acquainted with what we call coincidences in various forms, and we can and do distinguish coincidences from what we call genuine cases of causal relation. To do this we introduce the third of Hume's conditions, necessary connection. It is not enough that the cause should precede the effect and be spatially contiguous to it, it must be necessarily connected with it ; that is, it must be of such a nature that without it the effect could never come into being.

The difficulty here is to prove the necessity of the connection. In the two examples we have mentioned the connection has been invariable ; it has always happened that day is antecedent to night and that the one has never occurred without the other ; similarly, so far as my experience has gone and can go, there has never been a total eclipse of the sun without a precedent sound of the whistle of a railway-engine. If I rely on my experience, nothing could be clearer than that this conjunction of events is constant and, I might conclude, necessary. There is no reason, that is, why, on the

evidence of my experience, I should deny that day causes night or that railway-engine whistles cause total eclipses of the sun. On the contrary, I have every reason for affirming a causal connection in both these cases. But I do not do so. Why? Because experience and observation can never give evidence of the *necessity* of the connection between these two sets of events. Experience can, and does, give evidence of their constant conjunction, that every time that the one occurs the other does, in fact, follow: but experience does not, and cannot, prove that every time that the one occurs the other *must* occur. It can only say that so far, in the history of the world, day has always preceded night, and, in my history, that the blowing of the whistle of a railway engine has preceded the total eclipse of the sun; but it can never say that these sequences must occur. It can, of course, guarantee a very high degree of probability. Nobody would doubt that an event which he had observed to follow on another event a thousand times would follow on it the next time that it occurred; nobody would doubt, for practical purposes, that if there is a day there will, in the world as we know it, be a night. But this degree of probability, however high, can never become the necessity which is demanded by Hume before he will give to any event the dignified name of cause.

#### vi. *Origin of the Principle*

The conclusion from the fact that experience can never provide us with the certainty of necessary connection which we demand of a cause is this, that however closely we examine our experience and the world to which it refers, we shall never come across causality as we might come across a table or a battle or a mountain. Causation, in spite of its familiarity and apparent indispensability, is not a fact of the external world. Wherever we may look, we shall never find things or events in the

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external world bound together in a necessary connection. The most we can hope to discover is a constant conjunction, like that of night with day, which will give us a high degree of probability that when the one occurs the other will follow ; and, indeed, it is on this probability that we base our daily lives and our scientific experiments. But that is still not what we mean by causation. Whence, then, do we derive this notion that there is such a thing as causal relation, to which this constant conjunction is an approximation ? We have seen that it cannot be from experience that it comes, for there is nothing in experience which behaves in the way in which we demand that causes should behave towards their effects.

Hume, recognizing that there is no empirical ground, no ground, that is, in experience for it, holds that it is wholly subjective ; that it is a notion superadded to experience by the person who has the experience. Things do not behave causally, but we distort their behaviour in our observation of them to suit our own uses and purposes. So that we shall be able to produce the same sequence again if we so desire, we attribute to things the power of acting causally on one another, whereas in actual fact they merely follow one another. The lighted match does not know that it is causing the fire ; nor, in fact, is it doing so ; the fact is that the burning of the fire follows after the application of the lighted match to it. But that we may be able to light another fire with another match if we should desire to do so, we abbreviate the temporal sequence, which is genuine enough, into the word ‘cause’, an idea for which there is no empirical evidence whatever.

The whole notion, as Locke saw and explained, is anthropomorphic. Man sees that he is capable of activity which is followed by changes in the physical world, of realizing his desires and his willing, of changing things. He can kick a football, lift his arm, play a

It is possible to advance from the individual substances, and regard the whole universe as developing in accordance with an internal principle and producing from its own nature what are fragmentarily called the causes for the changes that take place in itself, and to embrace in one total stream of immanent causation everything that occurs. Causation then gives place to change, for the only cause, if the word may still be used at all, of any single event is the whole state of the universe which immediately preceded it, as if, when a cheese is cut across, the one surface so produced were the cause of the other.

Here we may with advantage return for a moment to Leibniz. Descartes concentrated his attention on the problem of the relation between mind and matter, which we have seen to be but one case of the relation of cause and effect : Leibniz abolished this problem and substituted for it the problem of change. Let us consider an example of his own ; what happens when I prick my finger ? There is a state A of the finger-monad in its normal state, and corresponding to it a state B of the mind-monad ; there follows a state A' of the finger-monad, as pricked, and to this there corresponds a state B' of the mind-monad, a feeling of pain. For Leibniz there was no problem in explaining how the prick in the finger produced a feeling of pain in the mind ; the prick does not *produce* the pain, although it is as if it did. Rather the two are parallel occurrences in two quite independent and disparate centres of spiritual reality. But he *has* to explain how and why the state-of-finger A' follows the state-of-finger A, and how and why the state-of-mind B' follows the state-of-mind B. He has nothing causal to explain, because cause is an illusion, but there remains to be explained the change from one state to another within each of the two separate substances. There must be something permanent, something which forms a factor common to both states,

something in which the change takes place, for if there were not there would not be change, there would merely be a temporal succession of two quite unconnected and separate sets of phenomena. Leibniz' explanation is derived from his view of the nature of the monad, and of the harmony pre-established by God between monads. A monad is created with such and such a nature, in such and such a position, that is, on the scale of being ; and its life and development consist in unfolding that nature to its true and real extent. The monad, of course, changes, but its changes are dictated and controlled by nothing outside itself ; its life and growth are the unfolding of the nature with which it was endowed at its creation. A monad can never be promoted in the scale ; it always retains its predestined position, for if it moved from it the pre-established harmony would be thrown into discord. But this fact does not exclude the possibility of change, except to minds which are obsessed by the notion that change always means change into some other kind of existence and incapable of conceiving of change within the same life, in the same point and in strict correlation with every other living being. The only justification of change, in the modern world, is when change is for the better, and change for the better means overtaking and passing some competitor who is at present ahead in the race for whatever the prize may be. Competition was a word unknown to Leibniz ; his monads change not in the hope of beating a rival, of moving up the table like a county cricket team, but from their own inner necessity to complete and fulfil their purpose. For them it was an inner necessity without choice, for the pre-established harmony implies a predestination, a rigorous determinism, and a complete inability either to alter one's own nature or to affect the world outside. And so it is meaningless, ultimately, to speak of the monads as having any purpose at all : the only purpose in the universe is the purpose displayed

by God when he created such substances in such an order ; and what that purpose can be we have no means of knowing.

*Consult further :*

- A. E. Taylor. ‘Elements of Metaphysics’, Bk. II, chap. v.  
Hume. ‘Treatise of Human Nature’, Bk. I, Part 3.  
F. H. Bradley. ‘Appearance and Reality’, chap. vi.

## CHAPTER VI

### PURPOSE

#### i. *Change and Purpose*

What is the connection between change and purpose ? To eliminate causation and reduce its problems to problems of change makes them no easier to solve. I can, if I like, say that I cause a change to take place in a thing, or I can say that a change takes place in it ; I can say that I cause blue to become green by mixing some yellow with it, or I can say that the blue becomes green when yellow is mixed with it. That is to say, the change may be considered either as imposed by me on something, or as just happening. In either case we can do no more than ascribe it to reality as a whole, for if it is true that the only possible explanation of causation is that the whole of reality at one moment changes into the whole of reality at the next, neither my influence on the object which I change nor the change in the object, whichever way round we consider it, is anything more than a very partial statement of what happens. Both are really and ultimately included in a change in the whole state of the universe, and to consider them as anything else is to deprive them of a good deal of their meaning, and to falsify, by the limitations which we impose, whatever is left. That is the great strength of Leibniz' position, that he will not take anything in isolation from anything else. Each monad, it is true, is wholly independent of all the others, and would seem to be as isolated as anything could be ; but each monad is totally unmeaning out of its context, for it is the whole system which gives

to each its position in the scale and the meaning which it derives therefrom. Without any single member the harmony of the universal choir would be incomplete. And the purpose in the creation and performance of the harmony is, as we have seen, God's.

### ii. *Design*

That the purpose which Leibniz attributes to God exists and is manifested in the world as we know it is a fundamental doctrine of all Theism, of all systems, that is, which include belief in a personal God. It is not necessary to believe that this universe of ours was created as the Book of Genesis describes ; it is not necessary to enter into the controversy between those who hold that man was created at a stroke and those who hold man to be the result of countless centuries of development from less to more complex organisms ; but it is necessary, for Christians and Theists in general, to believe that the whole history of the world, past, present and future, is the revelation of the benevolent divine purpose. In fact, the argument from design, as it is called, has been one of the favourite ways of proving the existence of God. When arguments which are purely rational, like those which have already been mentioned, break down, an appeal is made to experience, and it is claimed that everywhere, throughout the history of the world and particularly of the human race, there is evidence that a power which is benevolent to man is unfolding a plan and fulfilling a design. The world as we know it and man as we know him could not be what they are unless there were a personal God, responsible for the creation and conservation of the universe, for the plan which governs its development, and for the goal towards which it is making. This power is God, wishing well to his creature man, using and co-operating with him in the fulfilment of the divine design.

There are many comments which might be made on

this position. The first, and very simple, answer to those who claim that all around us are evidences of the activity of a benevolent God, is a plain contradiction. The difficulty is a very hackneyed one, but it loses none of its point. On the evidence of the past and present history of the world, and particularly of the human race, we are asked to believe first in the existence of a God whose design is being fulfilled, and secondly, that that God is benevolent to mankind. The answer might well be that in the face of all the untidiness, chaos and apparent failure in the past it would be rash to believe, on this evidence, in the existence of a God who is, presumably, omnipotent ; and that in the face of the pain which man suffers and the evil which he sees around and within him in the present, it is difficult to see how that God, if omnipotent, can be benevolent to man. The problem of the existence of pain and evil in the world and the existence, at the same time, of a God, both omnipotent and benevolent, who created and is therefore responsible for the world, is as yet unsolved ; for it is difficult to believe that pain and evil are really provided as bones for man to cut his spiritual teeth on ; and until some solution is found it is rash to build on the evidence of 'the world around us' an argument for the existence of such a God. It is admitted that there is pain in the world ; yet it is claimed that that world is the creation of a God who is both omnipotent and benevolent. If God were benevolent it would seem that he ought to remove such pain and evil, and that if he does not do so it is because he cannot, and is therefore not omnipotent. If he is omnipotent, and could remove the pain and evil if he wanted to do so, the only conclusion is that he does not want to do so and is therefore not benevolent.

This difficulty does not spring simply from human preferences and weaknesses. It is not merely because we ourselves shrink from pain and suffering that we find their presence in a world controlled by a benevolent and

omnipotent God difficult to explain, though this point of view often receives disproportionate attention from Christian apologists. There is a deeper reason, based on our conception of the divine nature itself. How can a God who is perfectly good and perfectly powerful permit to exist for a moment the evil and pain which are so totally contrary to his own nature? It is not necessary to go to the lengths of Spinoza's identification of God with Nature to feel the difficulty of an omnipotent God's permitting to exist in a universe which he himself has created powers and activities of a nature directly contrary to his own. That they are activities unwelcome to man is not the point; that they are directly opposed to the nature of God and are yet tolerated by him is a grave difficulty. We are told that this is a question which man has no right to discuss; that God's ways are past our finding out; that we, being finite, can never grasp the workings and purposes of an infinite mind; that, in fact, this is a mystery which we cannot and should not hope to penetrate. But even if all this is true, it remains a precarious foundation for the proof of the existence of God that he obviously has a purpose though what that purpose may be we can never hope to know. How, on these terms, can we know that it is a purpose at all?

The difficulty seem to arise from the fact that the human mind is very apt to regard everything anthropomorphically, to consider as if it were the activity of human beings action which is not. To some extent, of course, we cannot avoid doing so, since the only mind of whose working we are directly conscious, our own, is a human mind. But we must beware of reading into the actions of other than human agents the intentions, desires or purposes which we should rightly impute to them if they were human. It seems that in speaking of God's design or purpose we are falling into the same error as when we call a dog faithful, or a horse vicious, or a spider bloodthirsty. We are, perhaps, entitled to use

these epithets metaphorically, but we must recognize what we mean by them. We mean that the dog, the horse, or the spider, behaves in such a way that if it were a man we should be justified in calling him faithful or vicious or bloodthirsty. We do not know that a dog has the feelings which in a man would be called loyalty, or a horse those which would be called bad temper, or a spider those which would be called cruelty ; we can only see their behaviour, and the rest is our interpretation. We know that we behave in these ways, we see other men behave in these ways and attribute to them the feelings which we know to prompt our own action, and we call them by these adjectives. Similarly, we know that we, and other men, have ambitions, policies, plans and purposes ; when we have them we behave in certain ways ; if God appears to behave in this sort of way, then he may be said to have these plans and purposes. And then we return to a plain question of fact. Is the universe as we see it the kind of place which suggests that there is behind it what we call a plan ? And to this question there may be two totally different answers. But even if the answer were 'Yes', and it were therefore concluded that God had a design, there would still be the objection that designs and plans are, so far as we know, purely human expedients, and there is no reason to suppose that God has any need of them. The very notion of a design suggests imperfection and finitude, a not-omnipotent individual struggling against opposition towards a goal which is distinct from and other than himself, something which is 'over-there', and is recognized to be preferable to the imperfection of the strugger's present state. At the very least purpose implies a desire to change. And why should a perfect and omnipotent God either struggle or want to change ? The notion of purpose seems to be quite inappropriate to God, except by misleading metaphor. It is difficult enough to imagine how a timeless and infinite God stepped

into time and finitude to create this universe ; to suppose that he then made it imperfectly and has ever since been trying to remedy its defects and bring it more into accordance with a plan is to question at once his omnipotence and his omniscience. The importance of man in the cosmic development has been exaggerated since human personality is the only kind of personality of which we have any knowledge, and any attempt to conceive of a personal God must be anthropomorphic. But to conceive of God as very much like man but bigger and stronger is as far as most attempts have yet reached ; and one of the most obvious and most dangerous results of man's creation of God in his own image is the fettering of the infinite and omnipotent in the chains of weak and finite human purpose.

### iii. *Progress and Mechanism*

The attitude of science to the question whether there is or is not evidence of divine purpose in the world is difficult to summarize. Science seems to have accepted the theistic position, and then, while using it as the basis for its experiments, to have become dissatisfied with it and discarded it. The nineteenth century has been called the Century of Progress ; its outstanding claim to fame in the history of the world is that during it a scientific doctrine called Evolution was discovered, propounded, modified and ultimately accepted. Both these words, progress and evolution, presuppose belief in purposeful change.

Progress, of course, is not automatic. It is often assumed, by the hybristic present, that the twentieth century is naturally and inevitably further along the road of progress than any other age, simply because it is the latest and most recent time, and because, obviously, we are more advanced and civilized than our forefathers. It needs no more than a dispassionate glance at the civilizations of Greece and Egypt side by side with those of

Western Europe and America to-day to dispel this pathetic illusion. It may well be that the standard of material comfort is higher now than at any previous time, but a very little examination of the more worthy activities of the human mind will probably lead to the depressing conclusion that two or three thousand years make very little difference in the slow march of human progress. Without adopting the view that civilization progresses and decays in cycles, we may safely say that there is no evidence for an automatic progress dependent solely on the lapse of time.

Evolution seems to mean simply that kind of progress, originally observed in the science of biology, which leads from one kind of life to a kind which is called higher. In this word 'higher' and in the 'pro-' of progress we may find a clue. The changes which we recognize as an inevitable part of the life of an individual, a nation, or a universe, are assumed to have a direction. And that direction is held to be constant and unwavering, in spite of setbacks and relapses. And if there is direction there must be conscious purpose. Nothing moves unless there is a reason why it should move, and whether the change in the object is viewed as a change caused from outside or as a change that simply takes place, it must be admitted that either the external agent or the thing itself which changes, has some reason for doing what is done, some purpose to be realized. The course of evolution, then, was seen as the gigantic unfolding of the divine purpose ; and, apart from differences of views about the original creation, science seemed to be a strong supporter of the theistic position.

But there grew up the doctrine known as mechanism, which would dispense with a personal creator and regard the universe as a self-caused and self-sustained machine, with no spark of the divine in it at all. This is an extreme form of the materialistic doctrines which we have already mentioned, which banish spirit altogether from the

universe, and see everything, from mud and slime to man's thoughts and loves, as results of the fortuitous concourse of material atoms. The universe is a soulless machine. And it was commonly thought that when we have reduced the whole universe, including human action, to this mechanical and purely material level, we have done with it ; the development of the universe is mechanical, man is a machine, part of a larger machine, and that is all there is to be said. But it may be that the very idea of a machine takes us beyond the mechanical. For it is part of the nature of a machine that it should be constructed by somebody as a means to the fulfilment of a definite purpose. To think that by calling a system mechanical we have driven purpose out of it is a sheer oversight. Machines are essentially instruments, deliberately designed for a purpose, owing their very existence to the presence and activity of a conscious mind. A machine no more stands alone and explains its own existence than does a thought ; both require a thinking mind.

So even the extreme scientific revolt from theism leads back, in the end, to the fold. And this is not surprising when it is remembered that science above all studies of the human mind could not exist without assuming constancy and regularity in the behaviour of phenomena, without assuming, that is, a divine direction of the universe. The uniformity of nature is an assumption without which science would be totally impossible ; and the principle of causation, which is merely that assumption regarded in a special way, is its chief instrument of discovery. And it is claimed by Theism that the uniformity of nature and the causal principle are nothing but two alternative statements of the theistic position that the universe displays a divine governance.

#### iv. *The Moral Postulate*

But it is particularly in matters of conduct and judgments of good and bad that there appears most strongly

the need for belief in a divine purpose in the universe. We are all engaged, however much we may try to ignore the fact, in the practical business of living our daily lives. We can do this in any of a number of ways, carelessly, aimlessly, perversely, as well as consistently, methodically and intelligently. In any case, unless we are to live a life more like that of a brute than that of an intelligent man, we must, if only at intervals, reflect on our actions and make judgments which will declare this course good or that bad. This we frequently do, either in making decisions about our own line of conduct or in praising or blaming the conduct of others. Now it is argued, quite simply, that the very fact of our so reflecting, choosing and judging, presupposes the existence of a benevolent divine power with whose purpose we are trying to ally ourselves. This, the literature of Theism declares, is the fundamental moral postulate, without which all human action is meaningless. The articulation of the system is quite apparent. The divine will, which is responsible for this universe and, especially, for the creature which is in its own image, man, has been revealed, partially or fully, in such ways that man recognizes its power and wishes for nothing more than to become like it. For this purpose man is endowed with conscience, a faculty compounded of intuition and reason, which approves those actions which are conducive to harmony with the divine will, and disapproves of those which oppose it. And it is in accordance with the approval of this half-human and half-divine faculty of conscience that we judge actions to be good or bad, and choose or avoid them accordingly. Moral judgment and moral action would, on this view, be totally meaningless without the presupposition of a divine purpose, for it is on this foundation that all moral judgments rest and to harmony with this that all our moral life is directed. Belief in the existence of God and in a divine purpose is absolutely indispensable; for without it there is no

point in living, nothing to live for. We must believe that there is a God, and that God is a good God ; otherwise life is a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. It is not merely that life would, if there were no God, be rather aimless and futile ; the situation would be much worse than that, for life and death, good and bad, God and devil, would be words utterly without meaning, all swallowed up in the cosmic chaos. To preserve our sanity, to make daily life possible at all, we must accept this fundamental moral postulate of the existence of a good God.

What are we to say of this orthodox and dignified doctrine ? There is one preliminary weakness which must be pointed out, even at the risk of tedious repetition. We are asked to base our moral life on the fundamental moral postulate that there is a good God. We are given no arguments to substantiate the position, no reasons for believing that such a God exists ; we are told that we must assume this postulate or else our daily life will be meaningless. But that is just what, as philosophers, we must *not* do. We must not accept any postulates or hypotheses whatever, for we are trying, difficult as the endeavour admittedly is, to go behind all such artificial starting-points and find unhypothetical truth. We can, if we choose, act on the assumption that there is a good God ; we shall then be accepting the rules of a game, and agreeing to play at life in this particular way, as we might agree to play one of the several kinds of football or bridge. But we shall not be behaving philosophically if we leave the hypothesis unexamined and fail to do all that is within our power to remove it and base our life on something more categorical, for it is part of our philosophical duty to examine just such hypotheses and postulates as this. The scientist willingly makes these assumptions, for his special purposes ; but his science, built on them, cannot break loose from them : the philosopher is not to be bullied, in however friendly a

fashion, into making assumptions which he neither needs nor desires. He does not desire them, for his business is to destroy hypothesis and substitute for it fact : he does not need them, for he finds, in actual experience, that making or not making the theistic assumption makes surprisingly little difference to practical, daily, moral life. Not only those who make the assumption, but also those who suspend judgment about it, and even those who definitely refuse to make it, can still live sane lives and make judgments of good and bad which seem to have both meaning and validity. A mind of any independence resents being told that it *must* believe in this or that, especially when no reasons are adduced to convince it ; it tries the experiment of not believing, and finds that very little disaster occurs.

But there is another and more practical difficulty. The value of the theistic theory as a foundation for daily moral life depends entirely on the possibility of establishing contact between the divine purpose and the human agent ; if this fails the human agent is left alone and unassisted, and the divine purpose is, to him, as if it did not exist. The means of establishing this connection, at any rate so far as Protestant Christianity is concerned, is conscience. Of the nature and function of conscience there are, broadly, two possible views. Conscience may be either a faculty which, on every occasion of doubt, issues a clear command about the particular case, or it may, on the other hand, enunciate general rules, and leave to reason their application to any given particular situation. For example, on the former view, conscience would declare, when a man took a florin from somebody else's hand-bag, 'This is wrong.' And it would do this, apparently, without the assistance of discursive thought, and without the necessity of producing any reasons for its pronouncement. On the latter view, the situation would be rather different, but in essentials the same. Conscience has formulated the general law

that stealing is wrong ; reason gives the information that this particular act, for these particular reasons, can be called an act of stealing ; it therefore follows that this particular act is wrong. In this latter case, conscience has said nothing of the particular act in question, its duty ends with the affirmation that acts of a certain general class, known as stealing, are wrong. It is left to reason to apply this general rule to the particular case. But in both cases there is a pronouncement by conscience, whether about a particular or about a general law. And this pronouncement claims to be infallible and beyond question ; and, indeed, it needs to be so if we are to build upon it the whole of our moral life. Does conscience possess this infallibility ?

Let us consider the case of the theory which holds that conscience delivers a judgment on each particular case. Is each of these judgments infallible ? Can we be certain that conscience will always pronounce the same opinion on similar cases on different days ? Can I be certain that my conscience will not to-morrow condemn what it now condemns, or condemn what it now approves ? And if it does so, can both the mutually contradictory judgments be accepted as infallible ? Can I, further, ever be sure that my conscience will deliver judgments consonant with those of other men in the same situation ? Is it not rather a matter of frequent experience that differences of moral opinion occur about the same situation, even though all parties to it maintain their honesty and sincerity ? And when this occurs, which of the several different infallible judgments is the right one ? Do not the verdicts of the consciences of peoples and centuries differ so widely as to be contradictory ? Above all, is it not agreed that consciences can be educated ; that such education is, indeed, the aim of moral teaching and exhortation ? And if a faculty can be educated, brought from one stage of development to another, can it ever be infallible ? Pre-

sumably its earlier verdicts are sometimes found to be erroneous, or at least inadequate, else there would be no need of education ; but when does this education stop, and when is infallibility reached ? It seems much more likely, in view of these difficulties, that no one pronouncement of conscience can ever be regarded as infallible.

Is it any better with the view that conscience enunciates general laws only, and leaves their application to some other faculty ? Here, instead of an intuitive dictum ' This is wrong ', conscience provides the general principle ' Stealing is wrong ', and leaves perception or understanding to bring the present action under the head of stealing. Here we must beware of two different possible ways of begging the question. First, there is the danger of overlooking the real state of affairs indicated by the statement ' Stealing is wrong '. Of course stealing is wrong ; nobody has ever denied such an obvious platitude since Aristotle pointed out that some actions are labelled as wrong by the very names we give them. Stealing does not mean simply the transfer of somebody else's property to my own pocket ; the words borrowing, buying, safeguarding might equally well apply to that action. Stealing is performing this action unlawfully, wrongly, or wickedly ; so there can be no stealing which is not wrong. To say ' Stealing is wrong ' is to make an analytic judgment, to apply to a subject a predicate which it already contains. So that when conscience says ' Stealing is wrong ', it is not giving us much assistance. The difficulty is handed over to the other faculty which is burdened with the task of deciding whether this particular action is a case of stealing. Nobody denies that murder is wrong ; the difficulty that each man has to face when his country goes to war is whether killing his country's enemy is murder, and therefore wrong, or simply killing, and therefore, in certain circumstances, excusable. Conscience gives him no help what-

ever in trying to find the answer to this very intimate question. Secondly, there is another more obvious way in which we may deceive ourselves. Conscience pricks ; why ? Because I have done something which was wrong. How do I know that it was wrong ? Because conscience pricks. So baldly stated the circle in the reasoning is painfully apparent ; but in more complicated forms it is sometimes not observed.

There is another reason for doubting that conscience can produce effective general prohibitions or commands, apart from the difficulty of applying them to a particular case. It may be denied that any general law will apply to any particular case, because, as we know, circumstances alter cases, and the general law, in its attempt to be all-inclusive, may be so wide as to apply specifically to no case at all. No two cases in which moral action or judgment is called for are ever exactly alike ; there is always some difference in the character, intentions, or disposition of the two agents to whom the same rule is intended to apply. Just as each agent is a distinct and unique individual, so each situation in which he finds himself is unique, and can never be decided by appeal to a vague general law. If this is so, then there is no credit attaching to conscience for framing such laws, and no help to be drawn from them when they are formulated. But if it is granted that such rules can usefully be formulated, the question of their origin must be decided. We have seen that Descartes at least held that such general or universal statements were arrived at as the result of the consideration of a number of particular cases, and the discovery of a feature which all had in common. The general statement ‘ Stealing is wrong ’ grows out of the recognition that the particular acts X, Y and Z are wrong and all have one feature in common, namely, the unlawful appropriation of another’s property. Without this previous experience of particular cases the general statement could never be made. We seem then

to be reduced to the view that we have already mentioned, that conscience produces not general laws but particular verdicts on particular cases. But that is not all. For there must be some intervention of perception or understanding to recognize and classify these various actions as all similar and all wrong. The general statement is the work not of an intuitive faculty such as conscience is held to be but of a faculty which can dissect, reflect and synthesise, in fact of discursive thinking. The situation, then, is this : the general laws which conscience is said to produce may be quite valueless ; but even if they are useful they are produced not by conscience but by the understanding. If there are useful general laws at all, they are the product of thought, not of an intuitive conscience, which may, indeed, deliver particular verdicts, though there are reasons for doubting that, but certainly could not frame a general statement.

Indeed, it seems more likely that these moral judgments, no less than the judgments which we make about other facets of our daily life, are made not by any intuitive faculty, for if such a faculty were capable of making them it would be open to the charge of unexamined prejudice, but by that faculty to which is given the task of making all our other decisions, the understanding. To say this is to banish conscience from the moral life, or rather it is to give to conscience a different meaning. Conscience now becomes a convenient word for that body of previous experience and previous moral judgments in accordance with which we are more likely than not to arrive at a decision on any given new situation. Instead of being compelled to argue out each new case on its merits, we are able to rely on a mass of previous evidence of the application to other cases of the principles which we follow, and thereby to arrive more quickly and more consistently at a decision on a new situation which in some ways resembles the former,

though it can never be identical with it. But the important point is that both the principles which we follow and their application to a given case are at bottom the work of reason. The principles may be infected with prejudice, derived from education or sentiment, and the application weakened or perverted by self-interest, but the aim of every intelligent man is to guide his life by the light of reason. In this endeavour he will use what we have called conscience, but he will take it to be the approximation which his reason has so far achieved, open to correction and education, rather than the voice, half-human and half-divine, of a mysterious intuition. But if conscience ceases to be that supernatural law-giver, what becomes of the connection between man and the divine purpose? How does man become aware of that purpose? How does he know that there is any such thing?

The whole of this examination of divine purpose and divine causal activity, with its necessary implications in human life and experience, is an example of the difficulties that are bound to arise when matter which is at bottom religious is introduced into a discussion which is, or should be, philosophical. It has been pointed out that the feelings with which art and religion are concerned are by their nature incapable of philosophical expression; and the attempt to conceptualize them and use them as the materials of a philosophical argument is bound to result in such difficulties and confusions as we have seen. To examine these feelings, as we have tried to do, and make sure that they are genuinely non-conceptual and not merely confused and incomplete philosophical meanings is part of the philosopher's duty, and one can philosophize *about* art and religion as well as about anything else. But to try to adapt aesthetic or religious feelings to the Procrustean bed of conceptual meanings is a mistake. If their use in philosophical argument leads to such contradictions as we have seen to result,

we are perhaps justified in saying that they have no place inside a genuinely philosophical argument. The philosophical activity is different from the aesthetic or the religious ; and while one man may at different times exercise all three, confusion must arise when he attempts to be a philosopher and an artist or a philosopher and a mystic at the same time.

#### v. *The Good*

And yet, whatever may be thought of the divine purpose, most men are convinced that they themselves have a purpose of some kind in their lives. Indeed, as we have seen, it may be this consciousness that each man has of his own purposefulness that leads him to attribute something similar to God. There are very few people, in spite of modern novelists, who have absolutely no purpose in life ; it might well be denied that there are any, for those who would most hotly deny that they had a purpose have, at the least and if they are sincere in their denial, the determination to lead a purposeless life. To talk of purpose, of course, is out of fashion, especially in England, but if we may believe that the English talk least about that for which they care most we must conclude that their purposes in life are very dear to them indeed. Nobody seriously claims to live a life entirely devoid of purpose ; it is doubtful whether such a life is possible. The only difficulty, and it is a very real one, is to decide what that purpose is and should be.

Aristotle says, in the first words of the ' Nicomachean Ethics ' : ' Every art and every enquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good ; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.' But he himself is the first to recognize that this statement as it stands is not very helpful. The good is that at which all things aim ; but it is called the good *because* it is that at which

all things aim ; being universally aimed at means being the good. Until we can define a little more closely what we mean by it, this vague universal aim is of little use either for theoretical speculation or for practical activity.

Many things can be called good—pleasure, for instance, or honour or wealth—but it by no means follows that pleasure or honour or wealth is *the* good ; any more than it follows that because ebony and coal and soot are black that any one of them is *the* black. And we can say that pleasure is good and that the good is pleasant without saying that pleasure is the good or that at which all things aim. For plainly there may be many qualities which the good possesses that pleasure may not possess. And there may be many things at which a man aims which are all of them good but none of them the good. They may all be intended as means to the attainment of the good, as steps on the journey, but they are only means, and not ends in themselves. And only that which is a final end, and which is aimed at for its own sake and not as a means to anything else, can be called the good. There may be, and usually is, a hierarchy of apparent ends, just as, in Aristotle's example, there is a hierarchy of arts, each subservient to the one above it, but each of these apparent ends is really only a means towards the supreme end of human activity, the good.

The good, then, must be final, that to which every other activity is a means, such that it is pursued for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else to which it might be a means. It must also be self-sufficient. That is to say, it must be worth having for its own sake. It must be such that if a man attained it and nothing else in the world it would be worth attaining and life would be worth living. This introduction of a judgment of value is unavoidable ; the good is what is valuable for its own sake ; it is the end of all human activity. What is this end ? Not everything that man desires is *the* end of his activity. It may be an end, but it is not the end,

for it is desired not solely for its own sake and as an end in itself, but partly as a means to a higher and more comprehensive end. So, for example, wealth and power, which some desire, are sought not for their own sakes, but as the means to the acquisition of some higher good whose attainment they make possible. What is this end ?

#### vi. *Pleasure*

The most obvious answer is 'Pleasure'; and it is an answer that has been given by many, from Aristippus to the Bright Young People of to day. Pleasure, of course, does not necessarily mean eating and drinking and being merry, though the ordinary hedonist may not have thought of any other meaning of the word; it is, indeed, a word that has suffered a sad degradation, perhaps from the degradation, through the ages, of the human race that has held it to be the chief end of living. There is just as much pleasure for one man in looking at pictures or reading poetry or even in performing mathematical conjuring tricks as there is for another in caviare or a new cocktail. And this very fact should be enough to discourage both from making pleasure their chief goal. How can that be made the chief and final purpose in life which varies so vastly from person to person, and for the same person in different states and at different times? I may be said to pursue pleasure when on a fine summer afternoon I play tennis; and a game of tennis may then be said to be pleasant. But if I have played a five-set single I should not immediately find another game of tennis pleasant; that is to say, a game of tennis has ceased to be pleasant. A long cool drink is what I most desire, a drink which, six months later, in mid-winter, I should find anything but pleasant. Again, some people find their pleasure in playing cricket, some in writing poetry, some in bicycling. What is the common factor? What is there in these very different activities which gives

them all the right to the same adjective, pleasant? Simply this, apparently, that at this particular moment this is the particular thing which is desired more than anything else. But is it desired because it is pleasant, or is it called pleasant because it is at this moment desired? If it is maintained that a thing is desired because it is pleasant, it is necessarily implied that in this given desired object there is a certain definite amount of what is called pleasure, which anybody can extract from it if he be so minded. But against this is the admitted and obvious fact that people desire different things and desire the same things in very different degrees. Yet if there were present in desired things a fixed quality, pleasure, its appeal ought to be universal and constant; whereas, in fact, it is neither. It remains, then, that a thing is called pleasant because I desire it. It is because I desire a game of tennis that it is called pleasant, because I happen to like spending my time in this way that listening to music or conversation is pleasant, because I find this particular sensation desirable that I take an interest in a new cocktail. And if this is so, pleasure has no meaning apart from my momentary preferences and there is no such thing as an objectively 'pleasant', independent of my inclinations and desires. Pleasure is something wholly dependent on me, quite subjective, a word invented to cover the various feelings which I achieve in the satisfaction of my wants. And as such it is a dangerous word, and, if taken literally to signify an independently existing quality or substance, a misleading abstraction. When I desire a game of tennis or a hot bath, it is not pleasure I desire, but a game of tennis or a hot bath.

It makes little difference whether the pleasure which we are said to pursue is our own or another's. Complete selfishness and the highest altruism seem to come, in the end, very close together, for unselfishness and altruism always suggest the further question, 'To what end?'

Selfishness is a policy easy enough to understand, though the variability of pleasure makes it difficult to carry into practice, but when it is claimed by or on behalf of a man that his actions are always directed towards somebody else's pleasure, two questions occur. The first is 'How does he know that his actions will have the sequel he desires?' and the second is 'Why does he act in this way?' It is difficult enough to ensure that one's actions will produce pleasure for oneself, to attempt to legislate for so unreliable an end as the pleasure of somebody else is to court failure. And even if such other-regarding action were possible, why would it be undertaken? Why does one try to make other people happy, unless it is because one enjoys their happiness? If this is the real reason for so acting, the attempt to make others happy is no less a subsidiary activity than the pursuit of wealth or power, for it is undertaken with a further end in view, namely one's own delight in their happiness. It may seem paradoxical to suggest that martyrs die uncomfortable deaths because they enjoy doing so, but there seems to be no other reason, in the end, for their action; the enjoyment is not present, it may be delayed, but if it were not confidently expected they would not behave as they do.

There is the further symptom of the illusoriness and subjectivity of pleasure that was pointed out by Plato. There are, he says, not two states, pleasure and pain, which confront each other as plain opposites and of which either is the negation of the other, but rather three, pleasure, pain and a third neutral state, midway between them. In this third, intermediate, state we do, in fact, spend most of our time, the state of quiet or undisturbedness which is neither positive pleasure nor positive pain, but the absence of both. Yet, and this is the difficulty, this state may *appear* to be either pleasure or pain, according to the immediately previous state of the person who enters it. The cessation of pain seems to be pleasure, and the end of a pleasant state seems painful; both are,

in fact, this neutral state of neither. Relief from tooth-ache is not entrance into the state of positive pleasure, but the cessation of pain, the change from the state of extreme painfulness to a state of neutrality, which is so welcome that it presents the fallacious appearance of a positive pleasure. Similarly, the cessation of a state of extreme pleasure may appear to be positively painful, although there is a good deal of difference, in actual fact, between desisting from a pleasurable activity, for instance bathing in a warm sea or eating a good dinner, and suffering an acute positive pain. Everything depends on the previous state, on the direction from which the neutral state is entered. As the surface-level seems to be high up to one who ascends from underground but low down to one who descends from a high mountain, so the neutral state seems painful to one who descends thither from a great pleasure but very pleasant to one who ascends from the depths of pain. So much depends on the attitude of the person who is experiencing the state that the same situation may seem to persons who have entered it from opposite ends to present diametrically opposite appearances. Can the attaining of so indeterminate a state be the end of human action?

### vii. *Happiness*

Pleasure is too variable, too subjective, and, if regarded as existing independently and apart from a subject which desires, too misleading an abstraction to be considered as the end of all human activity. It is therefore suggested that to the exciting but temporary delights of pleasure we should prefer as our goal the more settled and steady enjoyment of happiness. We thereby avoid the difficulties of the uncertainty and unreliability of our own and other people's pleasure, and put before ourselves as the goal to be attained the equable and stable state of happiness. May we then say that the good, that at which all human action aims, is happiness?

We may, but only if we are prepared to go further, and say in what we take happiness to consist. If we do not take this further step we have expressed the merest platitude, and a meaningless one at that. It is perfectly true that everybody aims at happiness ; so happiness may be said to be the common end of mankind. But unless some more definite meaning is put into that shadowy word we are no nearer to finding out what, in precise and intelligible terms, we are hoping to achieve when we act. If happiness is a mere synonym for that which we desire, to say that we desire happiness is to say that we desire what we desire ; a statement true enough, but no more helpful than the assertion that murder is wrong.

But if we try to define happiness we find ourselves in the same quicksands of subjectivity which have already engulfed pleasure. Each man has his own idea of what happiness is. It would probably be agreed that it is more lasting, if less intense, than pleasure, the even glow which may at intervals leap into a blaze, but which maintains a high level of radiant warmth. But apart from this agreed factor there are as many ways of finding happiness as there are of taking pleasure. There is one disquieting feature of most definitions, that they regard happiness as dependent to a considerable extent on conditions outside the control of the agent, especially on the condition of material prosperity. The poor, admittedly, may be happy ; but the poor are themselves the first to recognize how much more happy they could be if they were less poor. Adequate wealth, easy circumstances, friends and congenial employment are almost necessary pre-conditions of happiness ; and, from the current opinions of his time, Aristotle adds good birth, a wife, children, and even a tolerable face, for nobody, he says,<sup>1</sup> is likely to be happy who is very ugly or ill-born or solitary and childless.

<sup>1</sup> ' Nichomachean Ethics ', I, 8.

Aristotle himself makes a notable advance by regarding happiness as not a state but an activity. A mere state or quality cannot be man's highest aim, for one can be in a given state or possess a given quality, for instance virtue, even if one is asleep, for a virtuous man is no less virtuous when he is asleep than he is when he is awake. Happiness is not the possession of such a quality, but the active exercise of a faculty. And, in man, it must be that faculty which man alone possesses, and which distinguishes his life from the vegetative or appetitive existence of lower creatures. This distinguishing faculty, the exercise of which is man's unique happiness, is reason. Whence Aristotle concludes that man's highest happiness is to be found in rational contemplation. But it is to be feared that this is by no means a popular view ; it is no more than one man's opinion on a matter in which each man thinks himself an expert.

### viii. *Utilitarianism*

These considerations would seem to be fatal to the theory known as Utilitarianism, which has had, and still has, a practical appeal far stronger than its theoretical value. In the hands of Bentham and the elder Mill, in what may be called its quantitative phase, it had a close connection with economic and political theory and practice. It held, briefly, that those acts were right and therefore ought to be done, by individuals or states, which produced the greatest amount of happiness and the smallest amount of pain of the greatest number of people. There is a healthy ring about this 'greatest happiness' principle, a combination of sane practice and high ideals, which makes it equally attractive as a moral theory and as a battle-cry of social reform.

But on a critical examination various defects appear. Happiness is not distinguished from pleasure ; indeed it is opposed to pain, and therefore identified with pleasure ; so the greatest-happiness principle becomes

the greatest-pleasure principle. This would be nothing but a verbal difference, did it not open the theory to all the difficulties which we have seen to attend the raising of pleasure to the position of the chief end of life, its variability, subjectivity and illusoriness. It is vital for this theory that there should be some definite thing, pleasure, which can be sought and obtained in definite quantities. For the possibility of measuring pleasures is essential to a theory which judges an act's rightness in proportion to the amount of pleasure which it produces and pain which it prevents ; there must be packets of pleasure and pain lying about the world, like parcels of different weights, to be distributed among those who will be affected by the agent's action. It is necessary that before action is taken in a given situation all consequences, painful and pleasant, of each alternative, should be foreseen, a calculation made of the pleasure and pain which will accrue to each person affected, and a course taken in accordance with the result of this addition and subtraction sum. Apart from the danger of losing the opportunity of doing anything at all as a result of the delay necessary for this calculation, there are at least two difficulties. How can all the consequences of an action be foreseen ? Every person who will be affected is to be included in the calculation, but how can the possible effects, for pleasure or pain, of even the most trivial action, be weighed through all the coming centuries ? Yet a complete calculation of, for example, the consequences of the Great War is necessary before the action of the ex-Kaiser in invading Belgium in 1914 can be judged. It was necessary for him to make it before he could know that his action was right. Again, it is necessary, for this hedonistic calculus, that pleasures should all be the same in kind and different only in quantity ; in fact, it is boldly stated that, 'the amount of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry'. But that is just the difficulty ; how can it be known that the

amounts of pleasure *are* equal? How can the pleasure derived from pushpin be compared, quantitatively, with the pleasure derived from poetry? The calculation is one in which the terms are of different kinds, unless it can be granted that pleasure is a definite thing recognizable as present in quantitatively comparable amounts in both.

It was to remedy the weaknesses of a strictly quantitative view of pleasure that John Stuart Mill introduced into Utilitarian doctrine the notion of a qualitative difference between one kind of pleasure and another. For him pushpin is not as good as poetry; rather 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question.'<sup>1</sup> But so, in spite of Mill's explicit claim, in the next sentence, that 'the other party to the comparison knows both sides', do the human being and Socrates. Each side is quite incapable of appreciating the pleasures of the other, and both can with equal justice be told that they are so incapable. But this more plausible version of Utilitarianism actually completes the downfall of the whole theory. On the strictly quantitative view we are asked to compare the amounts of pleasure to be derived from pushpin and poetry respectively; now we are to take into account not only the quantitative superiority of the one to the other but also the fact that one of them is a pleasure of a higher quality than the other. And we have to decide what amount of a lower pleasure is equal to a smaller amount of a pleasure of higher quality. If the hedonistic calculus was difficult before, it is impossible now.

Further, it must be remembered that Utilitarianism is a moral theory, a theory which tries to explain why we

<sup>1</sup> 'Utilitarianism', chap. II.

call some things good and some things bad. And the basis of all Utilitarianism is that that act is right and good which produces the greatest amount either of pleasure without qualification, as in the earlier version, or of the highest possible form of pleasure, in the later. The production of pleasure, then, is the end of action, and pleasure is the good. But besides all the difficulties we have mentioned there is this final objection, that while pleasure may be an important feature of most of our action, there seems to be nothing whatever about it that is moral ; nothing, that is, which can make it the basis for judgments of good and bad. Pleasure and morality, the pleasant and the good, so far from being synonyms, seem to belong to totally different levels of human life and experience. A partial realization of this fact is the reason for the introduction into the later version of the distinction between higher and lower pleasures. But by what standard are they known to be higher and lower ? If the Utilitarian position is sound, the highest and best is that which produces the most pleasure, so that higher and lower pleasures can only mean more and less pleasure-producing pleasures : if it means anything else, a moral standard by which some are recognized as higher than others has been imported into a theory which claims to set up the only possible moral standard. Either, then, on Utilitarian grounds, pleasure-producing means the same as good, which destroys all moral significance whatever, or a moral standard for discriminating between pleasures is imported from elsewhere.

#### ix. *Economic and Moral Action*

The difficulties of the identification of goodness with pleasure or happiness are so apparent that a determined effort has been made to find some wholly different definition of the good. Why should it be supposed, it is asked,

that the one can be defined, in all its uses and whenever it occurs, in terms of the other? And it is held that while we presumably recognize some connection between the various uses of the same word when we speak of a good dinner, a good footballer and a good plan, we do not necessarily and cannot in fact mean that these are all good in the sense in which we call something morally good. These two different meanings correspond to two different forms or levels of activity, distinguished as the economic and the moral.

Any thing, to deserve to be called good at all, must be connected with action : unless it comes into connection with the activity of a conscious agent it does not enter the sphere where adjectives of value, like 'good', are applicable, but remains outside, literally and wholly valueless. On its relation with conscious activity, then, depends the very possibility of a thing's being good. Activity itself, however, is not all of a piece, but contains two strands, to which correspond two kinds of goodness, economic and moral. The economic is that which produces pleasure, either of the agent or another, that which is concerned only with the present action as a single and isolated event, that which is proper to what is, on this view incorrectly, called the means as distinct from the end. It is purely individual, not in the sense that it cannot take account of other persons than the agent, for this it may do, but in the sense that it is unrelated to anything wider or more comprehensive than the particular situation or the activity of the particular agent. So all the actions of all men, as described by utilitarian theory, are what this view would call economic, designed to produce something useful or pleasant, but looking no further than the satisfaction of particular persons in particular ways. That, on the other hand, which may be called moral, is different from the economic in the width of its reference. It is not directed towards the production of the pleasure of anybody, but derives its

title from its trans-individual reference, its embodiment of some purpose which is not that of any particular individual, but is universal.

There may be some doubt about what this actually means : there is one thing at least which it does not mean. It does not mean that there can be a special kind of action, different from that which we perform in every moment of every day, which can mysteriously and for no very obvious reason be called moral. All action is action in special given circumstances, and each action that is ever performed is a particular action. A universal cannot be actualized in action without becoming a particular, so it is not to be supposed that moral action can occur without economic, that is, particular and individual, activity. Rather the moral is a kind of goodness which may or may not be added unto the economic, but which always demands the previous existence of the economic for its own existence to be possible. An action can be economically good without being morally good, but no action can be morally good without being economically good, for all action, of whatever kind, is economic and economically good or bad ; if it were not, it would not be action.

But what is it then that makes the difference ? If we are told that the difference is that in economic action we are concerned with individual and particular ends, but in moral with universal ends, we are in danger of rejecting the whole doctrine as unintelligible. What is a universal end, and how can one set about achieving it ? It is a criticism often levelled at Kant's moral theory, that when he tells us always to act so that the principle on which we act could, without contradiction, be willed as a universal law, he gives us no help whatever ; for even if we could, in the narrow circumstances of our ordinary activities, try to obey him, we are given no guide except the purely formal command to realize a universal end ; and that cannot be done in a particular case, for if there is

action at all it is particular action, this or that action, necessarily anything but universal. And here the same criticism might be made, that the universality which is the mark of moral as distinct from economic goodness must always remain abstract and unrealizable in an actual concrete case. There is an air of the mysterious and meaningless about the advice to realize universal ends, which are to transcend individual ends but are nevertheless to be achieved by the actions of individual agents acting in individual sets of circumstances.

A more concrete version of this view therefore recommends as a criterion of goodness not only coherence and self-consistency within the life of the individual agent but an expansion of this coherence to include not now anything so shadowy as a universal end but rather a social end as wide and inclusive as possible. Here the theory encounters practice, and, with a social and international outlook, calls that man good whose purpose, policy or plan is not directed to private ends of his own, however praiseworthy they might be, but forms a coherent part of the policy and purpose of a society. The individual cannot be regarded as self-sufficient or self-centred ; to consider him at all without taking into account his relations with the society in which he lives is to make an abstraction, which, as we have said before, is not necessarily wrong, but is always dangerous unless we explicitly recognize what we are doing. To see man fully and whole we must not wrench him from his social context, but regard him as one factor in the complex whole which we call modern society. And it is in proportion to the coherence of his activity with the policy of the whole of which he is a part that the goodness of the man is to be estimated.

Whether this theory is in all respects complete and satisfactory we shall consider later, but at least it serves the useful purposes of disentangling what is moral from

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what is not, and of providing some criterion less shadowy than the abstract willing of a universal end for deciding what the moral is.

*Consult further :*

Kant. 'Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals.'

J. S. Mill. 'Utilitarianism.'

Benedetto Croce. 'The Philosophy of the Practical', esp.

Pt. II.

## CHAPTER VII

### WILLING

#### i. *Faculties*

Before we make some attempt to examine more closely the nature of human purpose and activity, it may not be superfluous, by way of warning, to indicate a mode of thought, or if not of thought at least of expression, which is always dangerous and is, in this particular connection, fatal. That is the habit of talking of different facets of the individual's activity as if they were the products of wholly separate and autonomous parts of a divisible personality, so that one part is spoken of as agreeing with or opposing another, and the unity of the whole of which they are parts seems to be lost in its manifold division.

Throughout the history of thought this dangerous personification of parts of what should be an indivisible unity of personality has gone on, until it is difficult to realize that 'will', 'understanding', 'desire', are not actually and independently existing entities, but merely abstract names for concrete activities of the individual agent. Plato, in the 'Republic', introduces a threefold division of the soul into the rational, the spirited and the appetitive, which are talked of as conflicting, yielding, conquering or harmonizing, as if they were independent sovereigns. That kind of self-consciousness which Descartes did not assert, which involves the ability of one part of the self to observe and examine another, presupposes this division. Descartes' own theory of error, which is that the will compels the understanding to make

judgments without sufficient evidence, admits it. Modern faculty-psychology, which divides the active agent up into an endless number of individual watertight compartments, involves both this mistake and that of supposing that when an activity has been labelled as the work of will, for example, it has been accounted for, as if a synonym were an explanation. Any discussion of conscience which separates reason as one faculty from conscience as another and suggests the possibility of their operating independently runs the risk of this fatal hypostatization, this considering as an independent substantial entity what is merely an abstraction. The very words 'understanding' and 'conscience' are useful only while it is remembered that they are abstractions, and dangerous when it is thought that they stand for real agents. In English thought the mistake is the less excusable since John Locke fully pointed out its dangers centuries ago. In his 'Essay', talking of perceiving and preferring, he insists that they are powers which the mind has to operate in certain ways, and says,<sup>1</sup> 'These powers of the mind . . . are usually called by another name : and the ordinary way of speaking, is that the understanding and will are two faculties of the mind ; a word proper enough, if it be used, as all words should be, so as not to breed any confusion in men's thoughts by being supposed (as I suspect it has been) to stand for some real beings in the soul, that performed those actions of understanding and volition. For when we say, the will is the commanding and superior faculty of the soul ; that it is or is not free ; that it determines the inferior faculties ; that it follows the dictates of the understanding, &c. ; though these and the like expressions, by those that carefully attend to their own ideas, and conduct their thoughts more by the evidence of things than the sound of words, may be understood in a clear and distinct sense : yet I suspect, I say, that

<sup>1</sup> Bk. II, c. xxi, § 6.

this way of speaking of faculties has misled many into a confused notion of so many distinct agents in us, which had their several provinces and authorities, and did command, obey, and perform several actions, as so many distinct beings ; which has been no small occasion of wrangling, obscurity, and uncertainty in questions relating to them.'

This is not to say that such words must be altogether avoided, but they must be used cautiously and with a recognition of their real meaning if absurdities are to be escaped. It is safer to acknowledge their connection with verbs, the words of the subject's agency, by using, wherever it is possible, 'willing' and 'desiring' instead of the nouns 'will' and 'desire'. The use of abstractions, though almost indispensable and very useful when one part or aspect of a subject is being treated in isolation from others, becomes a positive danger when it is forgotten that abstractions are abstractions, and therefore incomplete representations of that concrete whole from which they have been abstracted.

## ii. *Free-will*

Neglect to observe this necessary caution, combined with failure to recognize the hypothetical nature of science, is responsible for the mass of problems which centre in the question of human free-will, problems which would never arise if sufficient care were observed in the formulation of the central difficulty. Briefly, the question is this : Is man a free moral agent, or are his actions in some way determined by causes external to himself ?

In favour of the former alternative, which is called Indeterminism or Libertarianism, it is argued that man does in fact feel moral responsibility and remorse, that he does feel that he is to some extent to be called to account for his actions, and that he does feel sorry, sometimes, that he acted as he did, and recognizes that

he ought to have done something else. These feelings would be meaningless unless man were a free agent, capable of doing what he chose to do and avoiding what he rejected. Against this it is argued by the Determinist that man is a part of the whole system of nature, which is controlled by, or at any rate follows, the principle of natural causation, that a certain effect must follow a certain cause, and that if a man is this or that kind of man he is bound to behave in this or that kind of way. The Determinist holds, in fact, that if one knew enough of the facts about any man, his ancestors, his environment and his education, it would be possible to predict with absolute certainty how he would act in a given situation. There is no such thing, he says, as a break in the chain of causal sequence ; a man cannot suddenly act in a way that is inconsistent with his past and present character : on the other hand, the Indeterminist says that man is a free agent, capable of spontaneous action and not bound by the rules of cause and effect which hold good in the physical material world. Those are the two extreme views ; we must see what there is to be said for each.

It is necessary, first of all, to disentangle what is genuinely philosophical from a good deal that has been introduced from other sources. Both religion, or rather theology, and science have made contributions to this problem, which, instead of helping to elucidate it, have only complicated a situation already difficult enough. And the contributions of both are from a philosophical point of view quite irrelevant. The theological difficulty arises from the attempt to reconcile two apparently irreconcilable facts, that God is just, and that God punished Adam and punishes Adam's successors for a sin which God, being omniscient, must have known that Adam was bound to commit. The Creator foresaw that Adam was bound to fall when he was tempted, yet the whole of the human race is punished for a crime

which, Adam having been created as he was, could not have been avoided by any human agency. Not only had Adam no choice, but all his successors inherit the taint of his fall, and are therefore predisposed to evil ; yet all this could have been avoided by the all-foreseeing Creator, had he been so minded. This difficulty, besides being irrelevant, is itself based on a misconception of the divine nature. God cannot be thought to have had knowledge before the event took place that Adam was certain to fall, for to think so implies that God is subject to before and after, to the category of time, which may be appropriate to human thought and finite events, but which cannot be applied to God, who, being by definition perfect, cannot be conceived of as existing within the limits of time at all, and cannot, therefore, have foreseen Adam's fall in the sense of knowing that it was going to happen before, in time, it actually took place. This is a very difficult idea to grasp, but a very important one : it is the difference between eternity in the ordinary sense of having no beginning and no end but persisting through time, and timelessness, which means standing outside time altogether. The very word eternity implies some kind of connection with time, and popular theology conceives of God as having existed through all the time that there has been, existing now, and about to exist through all the time that there will be. But, strictly speaking, if God is perfect he can no more be enclosed within the realm of time than he can be within the realm of space or of causal sequence or of any of the other categories which are invented by man to explain and co-ordinate man's experience. To exist in time and space is to exist in a finite and limited way, to exist imperfectly ; the perfect being is outside time and space, he has no past, present or future, no here or there ; and so, to say that he knew beforehand that Adam would fall is to diminish his perfection by making him subject to time.

The importation from science has more apparent relevance, and is indeed the Determinist's chief argument. It has been insisted that science is hypothetical ; and it has been pointed out that one of science's most valuable hypotheses is what is called the causal axiom, that every event must have a cause. This axiom, regarded by science simply as a hypothesis, an assumption, to be used so far as it is useful, without consideration of its ultimate truth or falsehood, has been applied, sometimes by scientists and sometimes by non-scientists, to the facts of human action. Human action, that is, has been regarded as a kind of physical, material event, and the method of explaining that kind of event has been applied to the sphere of human activity, without any proof that the transference is justifiable. Without any attempt to prove that human activity *is* a species of natural material physical event, the mechanical sequence of cause and effect is applied to it. And the inevitable conclusion is that just as in the physical world a determinate cause produces a determinate effect, so in the world of conduct a cause which we know will produce an effect which we can predict. There is involved, then, in the Determinist's position, a double assumption, first that human action can be subsumed under the genus of material events, and secondly that such events are completely explicable by the principle of causation. Of the first there is no proof offered, the second we know to be a mistaking of the real nature of scientific hypothesis. It is further argued, by the Indeterminist, that this position would lose such plausibility as it seems to possess if it could be proved that the ultimate constituents of matter, electrons within atoms, do not, as a matter of fact, behave in a determined and predictable way at all, but quite spontaneously and unaccountably. The unfortunately-named Principle of Indeterminacy is becoming part of the language of the market-place, and the Indeterminist has not been slow in claiming it as an

argument for his position. But this principle, which belongs to physics, should not be applied to the quite different field of human action. The physicist admits that electrons behave in such a way that he cannot predict their behaviour ; and this inability may be stated in two different ways. He may say either that he has not as yet discovered the principles in accordance with which electrons do behave : or he may assert simply that individual electrons are such that their behaviour is, from their essential nature, unpredictable and undetermined. In the former case, he assumes that there are principles, but says that he does not yet know, though he may hope some day to find out, what they are : in the latter case, he asserts the definite negative that there are no such principles. This second statement is dangerous, for if it is true there is literally no reason whatever why an electron should behave in the way in which it does behave rather than in any other, and there is no reason in the universe at all, but sheer chaos ; and it is on this formulation of the position that the Indeterminist depends, sometimes without realizing what are the conclusions which he is compelled to draw. But in any case, whatever application of this principle of physics the philosopher rushes in to make, the physicist points out that while the behaviour of electrons may be unpredictable, whether from their own nature or from our present ignorance, the behaviour of atoms and of those collections of atoms which we call human beings is predictable as a statistical average of the behaviours of the unpredictable electrons. And the physicist is right in resenting the enlisting of a garbled version of a physical principle for service in a philosophical controversy.<sup>1</sup>

In their extreme forms both these doctrines reduce

<sup>1</sup> See Bertrand Russell, 'The Scientific Outlook', pp. 108-17, and C. G. Darwin, 'The New Conceptions of Matter', pp. 101-2.

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us to the same conclusion, that of human impotence. Determinism results in regarding man as part of a material machine ; actually the Indeterminist view is no less hopeless. For if the causal chain can be broken, if there is no reason why one result rather than another should follow from a given stimulus, if there is no predictability in human affairs, and a man is as likely to do one thing as another, then there is no principle at all on which we can work, we are living in a world without reason, and we are simply the puppets of blind chance. For that is what chance means. It means that there is no reason why one thing rather than another should happen ; no account can be given of the process because there is no reason for it, it is utterly impossible to predict what will happen. We often talk of chance, but usually without fully realizing that it means anything as positive as this ; Indeterminism means a reign of chance, and chance is what is unreasonable. So we are no better off, as intelligent human beings, if we believe in Indeterminism than if we accept plain Mechanism.

And yet it seems that there must be some way out. It may be possible to reduce both Determinism and Indeterminism to nonsense, but the facts remain. On the one hand I feel morally responsible for my actions, on the other I do sometimes say to somebody, ‘ You ought to have known that I should not do a thing like that ’ : in other words we recognize both Indeterminism and Determinism as theories partially endorsed by our practical experience. If we are not free to do what we will our life is meaningless ; if we and our fellows do not act according to our character and our past our life is meaningless. What is the solution ?

We can find at least a clue in the word ‘ will ’. If we recognize its true nature and refuse to be led astray by its abstractness, it becomes clear that to say ‘ Am I free ? ’ is the same thing as to say ‘ Can I will anything ? ’ For it seems impossible to find any difference between

freedom and willing. To ask 'Is my will free?' or to talk of the problem of free-will is to ignore the fact that to be free and to will mean the same thing. For what is freedom? It is the power to realize in the world of fact a purpose that I have in mind. And to will something is exactly the same, to originate the practical realization of an entertained purpose. To will something is positive; to be free to do that thing is negative, in the sense that freedom is necessarily freedom from something, the absence of hindrances to action. And to be free to do a thing means exactly the same as to be in a position to will it. There are some things, clearly, that I cannot will. I cannot will to jump fifty yards, or to be at this moment in London, or to be living a thousand years ago. I can *wish* all these things, but I cannot will them. And I cannot will them because there are insuperable obstacles in the way of the realization of these wishes: I am not free to do any of these things because there are physical reasons why they are impossible. And it is impossible to will the impossible.

### iii. *The Moral Conflict*

We have equated freedom with willing. That does not, of course, mean that I will everything that I am free to do: but it does mean that before I can will to do a thing I must be free to do it. But what does 'willing' mean? For until we find that, our attempt to define freedom in terms of willing is simply an attempt to explain *obscurum per obscurius*. To Plato and Aristotle the will as we know it was unknown. Their psychologies had no place for such a term; and that is why we find that the moral theories of Plato and Aristotle, while they may be admirable practical guides, fall short of complete theoretical acceptability. Plato, in the 'Republic' at any rate, was haunted by his vicious tripartite divisions of the mind and the state; and Aristotle's treatment of this question of freedom becomes a strictly

practical treatise on legal accountability. But to say that the will was neglected by them is not to embrace the opposite error, that of thinking that a difficulty has been cleared up when a technical term has been applied to an abstraction. We gain nothing from considering each part of an organic whole as merely a part. That was Plato's own trouble with his threefold division of the soul. The inevitable suggestion, however much he may try to disguise it, is that one part fights against another part and the part that wins dictates the action. The difficulties of that view are many, but it is enough to insist that when a man wills it is the *whole* man that wills, it is not the intellectual element alone or the spirited element alone or the concupiscent element alone : the whole man acts whenever action takes place.

This may help us to a reasonable view about the moral conflict, wherein, apparently, most moralists spend most of their time. This conflict occurs whenever one part of the whole man is in opposition to another, particularly when what is called the 'higher' is in opposition to the 'lower'; and the outcome may be success for either of the contending parties, according to the character of the man in whom the struggle takes place. He in whom the lower is always victorious is a bad man, he in whom the higher sometimes wins is on the way to virtue, but only the man whose lower appetites are so controlled that there is no conflict at all is a good man. The very existence of the moral conflict is recognized as an imperfection, and the aim of the moral life is to make such civil war impossible. It is difficult to be sure how much of this account is to be taken as a sober representation of the facts, and how much is intended, by those who use the language of warfare, to be allegorical and metaphorical. If it is merely intended to convey the truth that man is often in doubt about his conduct in a given situation, few would care to raise any objection. But if there really is supposed to be

more than this metaphorical warfare, if we are to believe, with Plato, for example, that there is a literal conflict between separate and autonomous parts of the self, there are several difficulties that have to be faced. There is, first, the bisection of the whole personality of man into the two main divisions, higher and lower, with the former of which the real or true character of man is always assumed to sympathize. Here there are two questions which demand an answer. First, how is it known which of the impulses and desires belong to the higher and which to the lower part? The objection here is not that which was brought against Utilitarianism, that it imported from elsewhere a moral standard which it purported to provide itself; it is a question which any intuitionist theory of morality must answer. And the only possible answer is that man intuitively knows the highest when he sees it. But men have been wrangling for centuries on this precise point, what the highest and best for man is, and the various intuitive answers have been disappointingly dissonant. The second question follows from the first. Why, if the one course is known to be the higher, and man is truly and at bottom in sympathy with it, is the lower so often victorious? Men are said to be swept away by their desires, to be carried away by passion, to be blinded by self-interest, as if these influences came into man from outside and descended on him with such force as to overwhelm him in the flood and rush him away, struggling gallantly but helplessly, to a painful death by drowning. This is the language of wild metaphor, and can only pass itself off as sober statement so long as the abstractions which it represents are allowed to go unexamined.

To say that man always acts in accordance with the strongest desire is meaningless unless it is a platitude; for the phrase can have no meaning except that a man always acts in the way in which he acts, and would not act in that way unless he willed to do so. To personify

desires, and speak of them as if they were something with a dark and mysterious power to compel man to do what he does not want to do, is to falsify the whole discussion by introducing metaphor and parable. The strongest desire only achieves that title because it is that in accordance with which man does in fact act ; it would not be the strongest if he did not. But desire, no less than will, is a dangerous word unless its true meaning be kept in mind. Man is not a wretched straw, blown hither and thither by the wind of impulse and desire, for the very simple reason that the so-called desires and impulses by which his motions and actions are originated are elements in his own personality and part of his own conscious and active self. There are no such things as desires and appetites waiting about in isolation from his activity to influence him to do this or that from which his higher self will always revolt. Desires and appetites are the man himself desiring and appetitive, they are adjectives which belong to *him*, not extraneous nouns which invade him. A desire is a state of the man as desiring something, and can no more be repudiated by a pharisaical 'higher' self than can a thought by an equally fictitious 'concupiscent' element.

But if this is so, and the sub-division, which can apparently be endless, of the individual personality, is merely the creation of dangerous fictions, what are we to say of the moments when one of these parts is said to come into conflict with another of such a different degree of worth that the encounter is called the moral struggle ? What are we to say of the experience of the poet, which is apparently common, when he says, ' Video meliora, proboque, Deteriora sequor ' ? All we can say, and it seems to be enough, is that he has got his tenses wrong. It is impossible for him, *at the same time*, to see the better, however he may know that it is so, and follow the worse, unless he is prepared to meet all the objections which must be brought against the unpardon-

able dissection of the individual which his statement involves but from which the words themselves shrink, and to assert that *he* is at one and the same time engaged in two activities which are mutually exclusive, contradictory and destructive. It is more reasonable to suppose that his state of mind is that which is common enough, indecision, which includes a rapid, but not simultaneous, survey of the alternatives, and concludes with the choice of the one or the other. On what grounds this final choice is made will depend on his whole moral theory, but it is difficult to believe that if he is a reflecting man they will be such as to warrant his saying that the one he chooses is the worse. The survey of the alternatives may be a rapid or a slow one, the more difficult the situation the longer it would naturally take, but that it takes time, even with the assistance of ready-made rules of conduct (which, like everything else that is ready-made, are often an imperfect fit), conscience, and past experience to guide him, seems obvious.

Let us consider an example, trivial enough but typical, of the kind of difficulty which is normally dignified with the name of moral conflict. An undergraduate receives a letter on the first morning of Eights Week informing him that two maiden aunts from the country propose to come to Oxford for the week-end, and hope that he will have time, though they know, of course, that he will be busy with his work and lectures, to show them some of the more interesting sights and events of the town. He, however, being an ordinary young man, has already arranged what he considers to be an appropriate programme for himself, in which maiden aunts of an all too certain age are not included. What is he to do ? The disadvantages of such company at such a season are many ; he will be unable to play the cricket he had intended to, the punt-parties he had projected would be impossible, and he had hoped for more attractive companions on his College barge. He foresees a week-

end of exhausting tours of Colleges with which he is imperfectly acquainted, followed by tedious luncheon-parties and embarrassing afternoons ; and being, like most undergraduates, rather selfish, he is in despair. But, he reflects, he supposes he ought to do something for them ; they will presumably enjoy it, even if he does not ; besides, it might lead to family difficulties if he is merely impolite ; and they might, after all, be kind to him some day. So in the end, unless he is particularly brutal, he gives them such hours as he can spare from his weekly essays, and sees them off with the satisfying feeling that his duty has been done. How is his action to be analysed ? His first selfish feelings were overridden to the extent of sacrificing some of his more obvious pleasures, so he has apparently been successful in the struggle between his lower and his higher selves. But on what grounds did he really arrive at his final decision ? His second feeling was that he 'ought to do something about it'. This is usually taken to mean that he recognizes an obligation or duty which, in conflict with his more selfish desires, was sufficiently powerful to carry him along the better course. But, on examination, what does this mean ? Is he following a pronouncement of his conscience that he must be kind to these particular ladies ? And, if so, may he not reasonably ask why he should ? Or is he obeying a general law of conscience that one should always grant the wishes of one's unprepossessing relatives ? But we have seen that 'conscience' is no more than a word for a body of previous experience which can be readily called upon in such a situation as this. And his next reflections lend colour to this view, for his real reason for not treating his aunts' letter with complete indifference is that it will be awkward in the family and therefore, in the end, for him. What he thought was an obligation turns out to be no more than a realization that it will in the end be more convenient for him to forgo his more immediate pleasures.

in the hope of a deferred but confidently expected reward. That is to say, his action is, in the end, dictated by an enlightened self-interest.

The same is the case with all momentarily unpleasant actions which we perform. It is absurd to suppose that a man visits his dentist as a result of the pressure of the strongest desire, in the ordinary sense. Nobody, it may be confidently affirmed, has a desire, even a weak one, to submit to the activities of a dentist. But a great many sensible people do it, not in the expectation of immediate pleasure, but to avoid the future pain which they know will result if the visit is delayed. On reflection and cool consideration, it becomes apparent that entertaining one's aunts or visiting one's dentist, however unpleasant these activities may temporarily be, will, in the end, be more advantageous to oneself than sacrificing these so-called duties to more immediate pleasure. Only in this not very obvious meaning of the words can I be said to act in accordance with the strongest desire. That I do so act is proof that I have considered the situation, as far as I can, and decided that this is the best and most satisfying course to take. When I act I am convinced that this is the best course for me to take, that I am what is called morally justified in my action : I do not see the better and follow the worse, I follow what I honestly believe to be the better. I may be wrong ; the consequences may not be at all what I had expected, for without omniscience I cannot have infallibility ; but unless I believed that when I acted I was acting for the best my action would be merely stupid.

This same principle may be applied to situations in which the agent performs actions which are to a greater or less extent involuntary. If a burglar points a revolver at the pit of my stomach and tells me that he will shoot unless I hand over to him all my ready cash, whatever course of action I take may be said to be involuntary,

in the sense that it is not the course I should take if I were free to arrange the situation to my own taste. But in the situation as it is presented to me, and all situations in which I act are to some extent presented to me without my consent, I have the choice between two alternatives. I can either comply with his forceful request or I can refuse and take the consequences. If I believe that his revolver is loaded I shall choose the former, and act in accordance with the strongest desire, which is to preserve my life at the expense of my property. I do this, I fully and completely will it, because it seems to me, on reflection, to be the better course to take ; I will, that is, to give my money to this man to save my life. I could wish that this unpleasant choice were not put before me ; but that is useless, for it is ; I must will, or act, within the circumstances that are present. And the fact that these circumstances are not of my choosing, are, indeed, contrary to what I should freely choose, makes no difference to the fact that in them, being what they are, I do fully will and act. I cannot refrain from acting, I must either surrender my money or die ; and if I do not obey his demands I have as certainly willed my own death as if I had taken poison.

#### iv. *Intending, Willing and Acting*

To will and to act have been used as synonyms, not unintentionally. A great deal of confusion would be removed from moral theory if the words employed in it were examined with the aim of excluding those that are superfluous. The trouble is that which we have mentioned before, that abstract nouns, used at first for convenience, creep into a theory, and are then mistakenly supposed to have so much inalienable meaning that a place must at all costs be found for that faculty or stage which they are believed to represent. It is so with the words 'intention', 'will' and 'action'. What I intend I will, and what I will I do, but for this one

event there are three interchangeable names. The fact that there are three different words tends to disguise the identity of that to which they refer, and instead it is thought that since there are three words there must at least be three separate stages in the actualization of an entertained purpose.

But if the words are, so to speak, looked squarely in the eyes, it becomes plain that they are simply synonyms. What I intend is my purpose. Until this purpose shows itself in action it does not exist. I cannot truthfully say that I intend to pay my debts until I am in the act of paying them ; if I do say so when I have no money with which to pay them I am intending an impossibility, which is precisely the same contradiction as we have seen to be involved in willing an impossibility. I can wish that I had enough money to be able to pay my debts, just as I can wish that I could be in two places at once, but I cannot will the one any more than the other.

This may appear to be deliberately paradoxical, but the dangers of any other theory are too great to be ignored. What is it that is generally held to happen as the prelude to action ? From somewhere or other, either from outside me or from the murky depths of my subconscious self, comes a desire, which may be either good or bad but seems always to be assumed to be bad, the desire, for instance, for a drink of beer. This presents itself to my mind and there engages in conflict with my conscience, or even, in some theories, with my will. Should conscience or will be weak, or the desire strong, I, who have been standing by all this time, identified with neither side but sympathizing with the 'higher', submit to my desire, and form an intention in accordance with it, namely, to drink some beer. This is my intention when I walk across the room to my cupboard, and the intention is either fulfilled, when I find a bottle, open it, pour some of its contents into a

glass and drink, or for ever unfulfilled if the cupboard is bare. The false personifications involved in the earlier stages of this account have already been dealt with, but it remains to say something about the stages which are alleged to intervene between the final victory of my desire and the moment when the beer trickles down my throat. My intention, my willing and my action are clearly intended to be regarded as separate and distinct moments, if no more, in the total event. But if they are distinct how are they related? Does volition follow intention and action volition merely temporally, like three separate pictures on a stationary cinematograph film, or does the one insensibly glide into the other, as the pictures would if the film were being projected at the proper speed? If the former is the case, and there is no connection between them closer than a temporal sequence, we return to a situation similar to that of the eclipse of the sun preceded by the blowing of the whistle of a railway engine, and we are unable to find any reason why this rather than any other volition should follow after this intention, or this action rather than any other on this volition. If the latter be the case and these three moments merge into each other continuously and without break, how is it possible so easily to distinguish the one from the other so sharply and to set clear boundaries to the duration of each? In both cases some permanent background seems to be needed to hold the three together. And this background is most easily found in the purposive personality of the individual agent.

The expression 'purposive personality' is itself pleonastic. For the personality is not to be thought of as a lump of cement to bind together these separate elements of the exercise of action, but rather as identical with it. We can complete our list of synonyms by adding purpose and personality to intention, volition and action. Only if the concrete reality behind these abstractions is recog-

nized to be the purpose of the individual agent can any intelligible account of particular actions be given. And that purpose is his personality or character, the man he is. This truth Aristotle was within an ace of grasping when he insisted that the end for man was activity, and activity of that which made man distinctively human : he failed to state it explicitly because he entangled himself in the barbed wire of happiness. Had he succeeded in avoiding this he would have arrived at the conclusion that all activity is the imposition on the external world of the agent's purpose, and that purpose is his whole individual self. It is not only a part of the self, not even the highest and distinctively human part, that is so actualized, responding to the circumstances in which the individual finds himself, moulding situations and achieving results. It may be said that desires, conscience, reason, all have their part ; but it must be said cautiously and with the full awareness that these abstractions tell us nothing more than we mean by the statement that the individual agent acts.

#### v. *The Moral Judgment*

And as the recognition of this fact led us to reject the current view of the moral conflict in favour of what seemed a more reasonable one, so it may be expected to influence our view of the act in which the conflict is held to culminate, the moral judgment. The moral judgment is yet another of the steps which are ordinarily held to make up the journey from desire to action, being the explicit statement by the mind about the act which it is intended to perform, the stage which is represented by the 'probo' of the poet's version of his difficulty. When the parties which are contending for possession of the agent's soul have both stated their cases, appealing respectively to the pleasure which will result from following desire and the satisfaction which will come from the fulfilment of obligation, the reason, like an

intelligent voter, weighs their claims, gives its decision, and formulates the explicit judgment, 'This policy is the better.'

It is at once apparent, however, that in any such statement of the case as this the intervention of the intellect in the conflict of inclinations is not, by itself, decisive. Ovid himself admits, and most moralists recognize, though, of course, they deplore it, that the pronouncement that one of two alternative courses of action is the better by no means implies that that course is always taken. While he sees the good and explicitly affirms that it is the good, he follows the worse. This intellectual affirmation, in fact, is no more than another of the 'higher' elements which are overpowered by the strength of desire ; and intellect, together with conscience and the feeling of obligation, is one of the defeated forces which must surrender to the irrational and regrettable, but all-conquering, desire. It is another figure in the shadow-battle of abstractions, and man can, in fact, perform the wholly irrational act of doing that which he recognizes to be wrong.

But suppose, on the other hand, that, for once, the higher elements are victorious in the fight, and the agent, convinced of the rightness of a certain course, adopts it. What has been added to the account of what happens when it is said that the intellect or reason decides the rightness of the course and action follows it ? Aristotle, for instance, says that first there is desire, then there is deliberation, and then conscious purposive choice after and in accordance with that deliberation. This may mean one of two things. Either the rational element, instead of being on the beaten side, is able to bring such reinforcements to the assistance of conscience and the other higher elements that desire is overcome : or, reason referees the fight, and at the end sums up the points scored by each contestant, and declares conscience the winner. In either case, action in accordance with

the strongest desire, the particular action, in other words, which actually takes place, follows ; and it is action, oddly enough, contrary to desire. This whole way of stating the case is, as we have so tediously pointed out, so vitiated by the personification of abstractions that we may be pardoned for attempting a more concrete statement of the actual state of affairs. If the moral judgment, the supposed climax of the whole deliberative conflict, the focus of moral choice, is so insignificant that in the one case, that of defeat, it can be totally ignored, or in the other, that of victory, it is no more than the recognition of a fact already accomplished by other forces, is there any wonder that the function of reason in the moral life is difficult to describe in terms appropriate to its acknowledged majesty ?

Let it be clearly stated that a man never does anything which he does not want to do. The word 'want' is perhaps vague, but it at least avoids the dangerous divisions and personifications which are involved in misguided attempts at definiteness, and emphasizes the vital fact that the whole individual man is responsible for each of his actions. It is not mere paradox to say that, in the situation which we have previously taken as an example, I want to give the burglar my money to save my life. I might, and do, wish that this choice were not forced upon me ; but so long as I act in a world which is not entirely within my control, such situations are bound to arise. This is the element of truth in the Determinist position, that events and the situations which they produce are the results of circumstances which are not at my disposal. Other men act as well as myself ; there is an external world which besides spectacular interferences with the volitions of men like earthquakes and avalanches provides to some extent the situation in which I act whenever I do act. I cannot jump fifty feet, because the whole arrangement which we summarize in the phrase 'forces of Nature' prevents

me : I cannot always win tennis matches, because the actions of another man are concentrated on the end of preventing me, and may sometimes be successful. Nor can I know, with certainty, what effect in the external world any action of mine will produce ; I cannot be certain that the action which I perform in the hope of increasing another's happiness will, in fact, have this result, especially if I am not very well acquainted with his character. Always I am compelled to act in a given situation ; within it I do the best I can ; but it is unlikely that I, a being anything but omnipotent and omniscient, shall always either act as, given utterly free choice, I should, or always produce the result which I intend. Indeed, the phrase 'utterly free choice' comes very near to being meaningless. For it means that I act, but do not act in a definite, determinate situation ; I act *in vacuo*, without any limitations of time, space, or the intentions of other agents : this kind of action is impossible for anything short of divinity ; and then there is a doubt whether it deserves the name of action. It was something of this kind that Aristotle meant when he said that perfect certainty was not to be expected in moral discussion and argument, for human action belongs to a sphere totally different from that, for instance, of mathematics, where complete deductive certainty could be expected. We have suggested that such certainty itself is only hypothetical, but that does not affect the validity of the comparison and contrast. In a science like mathematics we can, once the original hypotheses are made and granted, deduce therefrom truths which are, within their own boundaries, completely undeniable, we can make predictions, and calculate infallible results. But when we are dealing with human action there are too many contingencies to be taken into account for us to be able to claim demonstrative certainty for any of our conclusions. For morality belongs not to the demonstrative sciences but to those which are compelled, by

their nature and subject-matter, to deal with what Aristotle calls ‘things which might be otherwise’, the contingent as opposed to the necessary. And this fact, that morality is of the contingent and not of the necessary, endorses the first claim of Libertarianism, that, briefly, things might be otherwise ; but it does not remove the element of Determinism produced by the necessity of acting within a given set of circumstances. In short, things and situations, when a man has to act, are what they are, and so determine him to act within them ; but what they are might have been different.

And what a man wants to do is, in point of fact, what he actually does do. His wanting to do it and his doing it are the same thing, for the only way in which it is possible to discover that he wants to do it is by observing that he does do it. The outward and visible doing is the view that others may have of the inward and spiritual wanting. It is not the case that this individual and indivisible wanting has parts ; and it is dangerous to say that it has aspects, for that elusive word is often only an incompletely recognized synonym for parts. There is less danger in saying that this acting can be regarded from several points of view, when, for one purpose or another, we wish to consider it in one rather than another of its several relations. Just as a particular science concentrates its attention, as the phrase is, on one aspect of a given subject, or, as we should rather say, regards that subject from its own special point of view, ignoring what is not relevant to it, so we may, for convenience of discussion, isolate this or that aspect of the subject, or regard it from this or that special point of view, provided always that we remember that we are doing so and are deliberately not seeing the subject steadily and seeing it whole. So the sciences treat the general subject-matter which we call experience, and so each individual fragment of the whole, each particular human action, can itself be treated. To talk

of intention, volition, will, desire, is erroneous only when it is forgotten, as it often is, that they are incomplete abstractions, which only come into existence at all as the result of a special and deliberately perverted attitude towards the concrete whole.

So it is with the moral judgment. The explicit assertion, 'This is good,' is not an inevitable step in the process from desire to action : it is not the case that before action can take place this judgment must necessarily be formulated. For only a quite inconsiderable fraction of the world's population recognizes its existence, yet everybody, every day, acts. And even among those who admit that there is such an operation as moral judgment very few would care to affirm that every time they are about to act there must come a moral judgment before they can do so. In case of doubt or difficulty, when they are unable, as it is said, to 'make up their minds', unable, that is, to form an intention, or to act, it may assist to bring the various sides of the case into explicit mental review, to inspect them discursively and decide of which it may be said, 'This is good.' It may be profitable, sometimes, to look at the whole operation of action from a predominantly intellectual or rational point of view ; and as a result what is taken to be the intellectual stage of the process will be exaggerated. But always it must be remembered that the moral judgment 'This is good' and the action which corresponds to that decision are not only simultaneous but literally and wholly the same thing. My recognition that this is good or right is identical with my decision to do it ; my acting in this or that way is a procedure which can, if I choose to regard it from an intellectual point of view, be expressed in the judgment, 'This is good.' But it can just as well be expressed in many other ways, and it need not be expressed in none : it is enough that I do it.

It follows, as we have hinted before, that it is impossible

for a man to do what he believes, at the moment of his doing it, to be wrong. For his doing it is a recognition that he believes it to be right, a recognition which is implicit in the very act of doing it, and which could, if he chose, be made explicit in the moral judgment, ‘This is right.’ It is, of course, common enough for a man to do what other people think to be wrong, or what he himself, in other circumstances, would think to be wrong ; but that he should do what, in these circumstances and within these necessary limitations, he believes to be wrong, is inconceivable. To say, ‘Evil, be thou my Good,’ is either to make quite meaningless noises or to say, ‘Do thou, whom all call evil, and whom I too in times past have called evil and perhaps in times to come, though I doubt it, may again call evil, be recognized as what thou art, namely good.’ Actions which are almost unanimously held to be evil are performed ; actions which the agent himself later acknowledges to have been bad are performed, if there is any weight in the Libertarian’s argument that we do in fact feel remorse. Yet there is profound truth in Plato’s doctrine that nobody sins wilfully. For at the moment of his acting he *must* believe that what he is doing is right in the circumstances, either because he hopes it will lead to his greater happiness, or because it is self-sacrificing, or because it is in accordance with his duty, or because of any of the other principles on which men direct their lives. He may afterwards find that he was deceived in his expectations, and his action would then be called wrong or bad. The forger, the embezzler and the seducer presumably know that their actions, if they are discovered, will be reprehended and punished ; but, supposing them to be hedonists, unless they thought that the immediate pleasure they hoped to enjoy was worth the risk of discovery and punishment, there seems to be no reason at all for their acting as they do. Later, discovered and punished, they may repent ; they may

find, that is, that they were mistaken in their estimates both of the immediate pleasure and of the pain of discovery and punishment. But unless they expected a balance of pleasure over pain not only would there be no reason for their acting as they did, but they would in fact not so act : for their so acting is a concrete embodiment of their abstract judgment that their chosen course was the best that was open to them in the circumstances in which they had to act.

The conclusion, then, seems to be that whatever a man does he thinks good ; from which it follows not only, as we have seen, that nobody ever wilfully does wrong, but that there must be as many different criteria of good as there are agents. We must not allow ourselves to be shaken by the facile charge of subjectivity which this statement invites, for there are worse things than avowed subjectivity, and one of them is a false objectivity. To say that standards of goodness are subjective is simply to say that different people hold different views about what is good ; and that, as we have seen, means that people act differently ; and that means that people are different, that they have different characters. And that is obvious enough. How their characters come to be what they are and what control they themselves have over their development are questions which we must leave the partisans of Freedom and Determinism to answer as they will. The fact remains that people are different, have different characters, and act differently. Is it more surprising that their criteria of goodness should be different than that their politics or their tastes in socks should differ ? There are some political views and some patterns of socks that are almost universally condemned ; similarly there are a few people who commit murder, burglary and adultery. The majority, for one reason or another, condemn them, and say 'That is wrong' ; they act, as they must if they make that moral judgment, and punish the wrongdoers. And gradually there grows,

out of many fortuitously concurrent subjectivities, a false objectivity, which says, categorically and without the decent preface, 'I think', 'That is wrong.' But the opinion of other agents, however many, cannot make a man think that what he thinks is right is really wrong. It can, and does, become one among the other circumstances which surround him and within which he must in future act, so that a man who is contemplating murder must always remember that the majority will disagree with his decision that 'This is right'. But there is no antecedent reason for supposing that they are right in their disagreement; they have the power to crystallize their opinion into the statement, 'Murder is wrong,' and back it up with force; and that may be enough to guide the would-be murderer's action into the way of peace. The supposed objectivity of such a mass-judgment is no more valid than that of any other majority which is composed of individual subjectivities.

There is nothing disgraceful, then, in admitting that moral standards must, in the end, be subjective. Even the choice and use of what is called an objective standard is a subjective choice, for it is the act of an individual and unique person, and until persons, with all their diversity, are raised or reduced not merely to a general similarity but to a complete common identity, it cannot be otherwise.

But an attempt is made to introduce some objectivity and at the same time to satisfy feelings of social responsibility, by widening the scope of the individual moral life to include the relations of the agent to society. If man is a social animal and if he must live in an environment of human society, his actions can never be merely self-regarding, nor can their effects and consequences be confined to the narrow limits of his own personality; they must always have some reference beyond himself to other members of his society. His policies and purposes can only be allowed such realization as will not

hinder but assist the policy of his family, city, country and state. Each separate act is part of a larger plan or policy ; and the policy of each person is modified by his relations with other agents in the various corporate bodies to which he belongs. A good life is one which, first, is internally consistent with itself, and it is called good precisely because it *is* so consistent. But that in itself is not enough, for there are lives which are completely self-consistent but which nevertheless one would hesitate to call good, for instance the lives of deliberate criminals, of Nero, of Tarquin, or of the Devil. Besides an internal harmony there must be an external consonance of the life of the individual with the aims and policy of the larger wholes to which he belongs, and a life cannot be called wholly good until this consonance is complete.

But here too there are difficulties. How is it to be known that the life of the larger whole is itself directed towards an end which can without doubt be called good ? Are there not some societies which are imperfect, and some policies which, notwithstanding their breadth, are unequivocally called wrong ? The criterion is still to seek, whether the scope of the moral life be limited to the individual agent or extended to the whole society in which he lives. A relatively small individual policy may be better than a wider and more public one with which it is in direct conflict ; how else would reforms and moral advances ever take place ? It is not enough that a policy should be wide and ever-widening ; it must also be a good policy.

*Consult further :*

Aristotle. ‘ Nicomachean Ethics ’, esp. Bks. I, III, x.  
 Locke. ‘ Essay on the Human Understanding ’, Bk. II, chap. XXI.

H. J. Paton. ‘ The Good Will.’

## CHAPTER VIII

### JUDGMENT

#### i. *Judgment and Judging*

In our brief consideration of acting and willing we have been introduced to the moral judgment, and it is fitting that we should now consider judgment in general. Three possible meanings of the word seem to present themselves. ‘ Judgment ’ may mean, first, that which we may, with due recollection of Locke’s caution, call the judging faculty, as when we say that Jones is a man of sound judgment, meaning that he has the faculty of making sound statements and reaching sound conclusions. Or it may mean the active exercise of this faculty, if it has hitherto been dormant, as when we say, for instance, that Jones’s judgment of the situation was correct. Or, finally, it may mean the statement which is the result of this activity, the explicit assertion, for example, that murder is wrong. The distinction between the two first of these meanings is slight and of no great importance, being simply the distinction between a faculty which is held to be permanently possessed but only potentially active and any particular actual exercise of that faculty, the distinction, which is important in other connections but negligible here, between potentiality and actuality. The difference between these two and the third, however, is of vital importance. It is the difference, broadly, between verb and noun, between the agent and his action. The faculty is exercised, and that is verbal, the result is a particular judgment, and that is nominal. It is often maintained that the whole

philosophy of Berkeley is based on a confusion similar to that which we must avoid here, between the two meanings of the word 'perception'. For when he says that our perceptions are subjective he is right if he means by 'perception' the activity of the mind when it is perceiving, but wrong if he means that which the mind, when it is perceiving, perceives, and wrong still more when he confuses what is plainly and admittedly subjective with what need be neither subjective nor, indeed, mental at all. However that may be, we may learn a lesson from this accusation, and be careful to distinguish quite clearly the mental activity of judging from its written or spoken outcome, a particular judgment. It will probably be profitable, on the principle of proceeding from the more to the less known, to proceed from what we can hear, see and discuss, actual particular judgments, to the faculty of judging by whose exercise they are brought into being. We must begin, then, with an examination of the ordinary judgments which we make every day.

## ii. *Judgment and Statement*

Let us take half a dozen random remarks which we might make in the course of a day: 'It rained this morning', 'God exists', 'Queen Anne is dead', 'God save the King', 'This orange is sour', 'I prefer Camembert to Gorgonzola'. The question we must try to answer is, Which of these are judgments, and why?

Traditionally it was maintained in the orthodox logic which descends from Aristotle that a judgment must contain three elements, a subject, a copula, and a predicate, the first a noun, the second a part of the verb 'to be', and the third an adjective or adjectival phrase. There is apparent here the influence of grammar not only on men's thought but on men's thought about thought. As a simple sentence is built up of these three elements, so, it was assumed, in a precisely similar

way, is a coherent thought constructed. The essence of a judgment is that it is a grammatical sentence of this kind, a construction from three separable, because previously separate, elements, which, by an activity of the mind, are brought into the relation of predication, the relation, that is, in which a noun has an adjective tacked on to it and is claimed as belonging to the class for which the adjective stands. The judgment is regarded in isolation from the activity by which it is produced, simply as a grammatical sentence of a certain kind, spoken or written, wherein one word is attached to another by the copula as one railway-carriage is attached to another by a coupling. Discussion of judgments is then discussion simply of words and grammar, and the only concern of the logician is to see whether or not the coupling fits.

On this view, of the list of remarks we have made only three can claim to be called judgments, the first, the third and the fifth; for these three alone have the three necessary parts, subject, predicate and part of the verb 'to be'. It is clear from this that by no means all—in this case precisely one-half—of the statements which we make qualify for the title of judgments. And that simply because they happen to fall into a certain rigid grammatical form. It is not enough that a statement should be an assertion of fact, for two others in the list are that; it is essential that the three-term grammatical form should be adopted.

This is obviously a narrow and formalistic doctrine, and its continued existence and influence is due almost entirely to a literal and grammatical view of the nature and function of logic. To begin with, it can take adequate account of one kind of judgment, that of plain assertion or denial; it can explain only partially the disjunctive judgment, in which it is said that A is either B or C; and it cannot include at all the hypothetical judgment, that, for instance, *if A is equal to B and B is equal to*

C, then A is equal to C, and this form of the judgment is fundamental for discursive argument and thinking. Nor does it allow for the many different interpretations which can validly be put upon even such a simple statement as the first of our random list. When judgments are spoken there are to be considered not only the actual words of the speaker, but all those tones and modifications of voice, inflections, stresses and graduations which can only imperfectly be represented in writing or print, but which are quite as important as the actual words. Even the trivial statement which we have put first on our list allows several different shades of meaning according to the emphasis with which various parts of the sentence are spoken. If I say, 'It rained this morning', in a perfectly flat voice, I should be stating a plain fact without much interest to anybody, though even then there must have been some reason in the preceding conversation for my saying it. But if I say, 'It *rained* this morning', with emphasis on the verb, I seem to be expressing surprise that it should have done so ; if I say, 'It rained *this* morning', emphasizing the demonstrative adjective, I wish to convey that, whatever it may have done yesterday and the day before, it certainly rained this morning ; if I say, 'It rained this *morning*', I mean that it was not this afternoon or this evening that it rained, but this morning. These, and many other, meanings, are all concealed behind the written statement, 'It rained this morning', and without frequent use of underlining and italics it is impossible to tell which of the various meanings is intended. This is no trivial matter, if the purpose of writing is to communicate human thoughts, for it is clear that to each of these various ways of emphasizing the same words there corresponds a unique and quite distinct thought. Yet of these differences of meaning this view of the judgment can take no account.

It is unable, further, to include within its boundaries

the second and the last of our examples, 'God exists' and 'I prefer Camembert to Gorgonzola'. Yet these seem both to be the results of the process which we might expect to be called judging. In both cases I am expressing a conclusion which I have reached as the result of thought and deliberation, but I am not at liberty to call either of these statements a judgment until I have turned it into an unnatural form to comply with the demand that it should contain three terms. I can, if I choose, say, 'God is an existent being', which is as nearly as is humanly possible the same thing as saying 'God exists'; and I can, if I choose, say, 'I am one of the persons who prefer Camembert to Gorgonzola', which is nearly but not quite the same thing as saying, 'I prefer Camembert to Gorgonzola'. Yet unless I say something like this, either perverting the meaning or contorting the expression of what I want to say, my statements are but statements or assertions, they are not judgments.

It is suggested, alternatively, that a judgment is essentially that at which we arrive after a period of indecision. There is doubt, conflict, deliberation, weighing of arguments and opinions, and then the judgment is born after this gestatory period of indecision. Other statements and remarks may be made, as the phrase is, 'without thinking', spontaneously and unreflectingly; exclamations, doubts, questions, may all arise in this way, and so too may many statements, which yet do not deserve to be called judgments, because they are not the conclusion of a period or process of deliberative indecision. Only when there is a making up of the mind, as there is, for example, in the case of a moral struggle and the consequent explicit moral judgment, is there a judgment properly so called.

In this suggestion there is an element of truth, but we must enquire whether it is accidental or not. Is it a necessary and essential characteristic of a judgment that

it should so occur, or is it the case that most, if not all, judgments do in fact so occur, but accidentally? This is important if we are trying to discover the one inalienable and universal feature which all judgments have in common: a feature that is an accident or a coincidence, though it may be found in many or even all examples, will not satisfy us. Let us again consider a trivial instance. I go into my friend's room, and I see on the table an object which has the size and shape of a banana, but is of a bright blue colour. My first impulse is to think that it is a banana, for I am not acquainted with any other fruit of that size, shape and texture; but the colour troubles me, for I have never seen a blue banana. I am sufficiently interested to examine it more closely, and when I do so I find that it has also the smell and taste of a normal banana. Putting together my impressions, I decide that in spite of its unusual colour it is in fact a blue banana; and I say to myself or to somebody else who is with me, 'That is a blue banana'. Here there are all the conditions required to enable my statement to be called a judgment; there has been deliberation, the weighing of alternatives, and the final end of my indecision when I decided that I was justified in calling it a blue banana. Satisfied, I go away. The next day, I return, and when I again see the strange fruit on my friend's table, I say to the owner, 'That is a blue banana'. To-day, there is no indecision, I am merely repeating the conclusion at which I arrived on the previous day; I have no need to deliberate or consider, all that was done before. Yet I utter precisely the same sentence as I had pronounced at the end of my reflections on the previous day; but on the former occasion I made a judgment, whereas to-day I merely make a statement, unless, indeed, the fact of my having been compelled to reflect on the previous day is enough to give to the statement which I make to-day the status of judgment. Nor would my friend, if he had been

out at the time of my first visit, know, when, on my second visit, I said, 'That is a blue banana', whether I was making a judgment or not. Here we have two identical statements, the one of which is a judgment and the other not, and there is nothing to tell the person who hears only one of them whether he is listening to a judgment or to a mere statement.

This suggestion, then, seems to give us a clue but not a satisfactory answer to our question, What is the distinguishing characteristic of a judgment? But if we follow up the clue we may arrive at a solution. A judgment was made at the end of a period of indecision; and what my friend was quite entitled to think was a judgment, though actually it was not, was made when I wished to communicate to him my surprised interest in his fruit. If we allow, for the moment, that my friend was right in supposing that I was making a judgment and not a mere statement, we find that I make judgments either to announce my decision, after deliberation, to myself, or to communicate that decision to others. It was to make clear to myself what the results of my thinking were that I framed the explicit assertion, 'That is a blue banana', and it was to communicate that thought to my friend that I made the remark aloud to him.

Further, if this is the real reason why I make judgments, and if we recollect our conclusions about the moral judgment, which, after all, is only one species of the genus we are discussing, we shall find our solution. It is always possible, in a situation that calls for moral conduct, to make a moral judgment; but it is never necessary to do so, unless we are regarding the whole situation from a deliberately-chosen intellectual point of view, for action itself is equivalent to the explicit judgment, 'This is good'. And precisely the same principle will apply to judgments of other kinds; they always can but never need be made. At a certain point in my

thinking I can, if I choose to be deliberately intellectual, make the explicit judgment, 'That is a blue banana', in order to present the fact to myself in all its importance : and I can, later, if I again choose to be explicit, make the same statement to my friend. But in neither case *need* I do so ; indeed, unless I talk to myself it is very doubtful whether I should do so at all in the first case, for one very seldom, in actual fact, makes explicit judgments to oneself, very seldom, that is, takes a deliberately intellectual point of view when one is alone ; and, in the second case, I could convey my meaning almost equally well without using the explicit judgment form, for instance, by jerking my thumb towards the table and saying, 'Blue banana', words which serve quite adequately to express what I mean.

### *iii. Judgment, Inference, and Perception*

Judgment, then, is a moment, which may or may not be made explicit, in a process of thinking. We must now try to define this process a little more clearly, and to do so we must examine more closely what happened before I said, 'That is a blue banana'. In doing so we shall find ourselves discussing the problem of perception, where logic, psychology and metaphysics meet to tell us what it is that occurs when we see anything.

When I entered my friend's room I saw a blue banana. Can that action, of seeing, be analysed into parts ? According to one theory I am, when I am seeing, purely passive ; sense-data are given off by the object, received by my eyes, transmitted to my brain, and passed on to my mind, where there arises an idea corresponding to the object which has exercised its power of causing various simple ideas in my mind. I received, in this case, the simple ideas of blueness, of a determinate shape, of a definite size, and so on. These materials provided by passive sensation my active reflection begins to arrange and adapt until it reaches a complex idea, first of banana

and then of blue banana. But there is a difficulty which must be faced by any view that separates this process into two parts, respectively material and mental or active and passive, a difficulty which was fatal to the doctrine of Representative Perception, namely, how does what was passive ever become active, and how does what was material have a mental effect? The difficulty may be partly though not perhaps entirely met by insisting on two points; first, that throughout the process activity is going on, and second, that whether there is such a thing as 'the material' or not it is not until it becomes mental that it is of any importance.

The first point may be expressed in another way by saying that when a man sees he does not open his eyes to whatever may happen to enter, rather he looks out through his eyes. The mind of man, if it is a mind at all, is essentially active, producing, originating; it does not lie about waiting for some force to be exercised on it. And when a man looks out through his eyes at his surroundings, all that he has been and is contributes to what he sees. It is because men are different that one finds pleasant what another detests, though the supposedly stable object is the same for both; this is the reason why opinions differ about anything, morals, politics, religion, even philosophy, because what are called the same facts appear to different people in quite different ways. The Empiricists, notably the British philosophers Locke, Berkeley and Hume, held that all knowledge comes from experience, that the mind of an infant is a *tabula rasa* or a sheet of white paper, on to which various simple ideas are poured by the action of external objects. It may well be asked how such a mind could perform even the limited activity involved in reflection on these ideas of sensation and their re-arrangement and adaptation. But it is more important to mention the opposite view, that man is born with a supply of innate ideas, and his life consists of having these ideas called into

real existence by the influence of external stimuli. Or at least, and this, it seems, can hardly be denied, that all human minds, irrespective of their particular antecedents, are by their very nature capable of knowing only in certain ways. Human knowledge is confined to certain categories, certain general moulds into which the raw material of experience must fit if it is to be capable of being apprehended and transformed into knowledge. This is the position summarized by Kant in the sentence, 'All our knowledge begins with experience ; but it by no means follows that all our knowledge arises out of experience.' He insists that besides the obvious contribution to experience which comes from outside the experiencing subject there is a factor contributed by the subject himself, the direction into intelligible channels of the material which experience provides. This subjective contribution is to be considered not as a fragment of the same kind as that which comes from without, but rather as a way of organizing that external material which makes it intelligible and turns it into knowledge. It is, indeed, even more fundamental than this, it is the very possibility of experiencing at all, the very fact of being a subject. Again we must recognize the danger of abstract nouns. It is too often unthinkingly said that experience teaches us, shows us, gives us information, or provides us with knowledge, as if experience were a particularly effective schoolmaster and we passive recipients of information. Actually, experience is nothing of the kind ; it could not exist at all unless it were my experience or your experience or the experience of some other particular conscious subject. Experience is not something external and opposed to the subject, it is essentially an activity of a subject : if there were no subjects there would be no experience. The weakness of the Empiricist theory comes from neglecting this elementary fact, and talking as if experience were something which thrust itself from outside on a passive, even

unconscious subject. But what are called the same external facts can differ very widely in their appearance and appeal to different subjects, as is clear from the different attitudes of the expert and the layman to a piece of music, a picture, or a flower. The expert 'sees more in it' than the layman can grasp, yet the external stimuli are assumed to be the same; the difference, then, can only come from the different experiencing subjects. And if experiences differ so much, as they do, among comparatively similar men, who are all conscious subjects of the same general type and different only in details, the difference between the experience of either and of a generically different subject will be correspondingly different, though the external situation remain precisely the same. The attitude of a cat towards a mouse is not that of a human being, simply because the appeal of the same external object is totally different, in the two cases; we credit animals, birds, insects and plants with decreasing quantities and quality of experience, until we arrive at the point where, so far as we can tell, consciousness stops, and with it the possibility of experiencing at all.

The second point raises again all those difficulties which we have mentioned of bridging the gulf between the mental and the material; and until some adequate answer is found to the riddle of the fusion, in human beings as we know them, of these two apparently irreconcilable elements, no satisfying answer to these difficulties can be given. We can but recognize them, and emphasize their importance in this problem of perception. Now it is almost impossible to give any short statement of the doctrine of Kant without either hedging it round with so many reservations as to make it both unintelligible and useless or taking the risk of giving a totally false impression. But with this caution it may be said that Kant assumes that in any moment of perceptual experience that which is other than the subject is a

jumbled, higgledy-piggledy, unsynthesized manifold of sense-impressions, which then become categorized—that is to say, pass through the various channels appropriate to transform them into possible material of experience—and finally come before the mind as perceived empirical objects. But he cannot explain how this categorization takes place, except by inventing a faculty specially for the task, and that is no explanation at all ; he can only say that it does in fact happen. This is, in effect, what has been graphically if flippantly called a ‘sausage-machine’ theory. Various unrelated and unformed bits of material are thrown into a machine, which, after due performance of its function, turns them out as sausages. The analogy is by no means complete, for sausages and sausage-meat are, after all, both material, while what we are trying to explain is the derivation of something mental from material constituents ; but even if it were, the act of perceiving is not explained by being likened to the operation of a sausage-machine. How do we know that the various bits of material with which we are presented will pass through our mental sausage machine ? What would happen if one piece could not be assimilated ? And what right have we to say, beforehand, that the material of an experience, though it is unsynthesized when it is presented to us, is yet capable of synthesis by us ?

But that this mentalization of the material must take place if there is to be thinking at all is undeniable, and it is in perception, in however inexplicable a way, that this transformation takes place. There appear, at first sight, to be two general kinds of judgments, that which is concerned only with abstract ideas, and that which is about actual existing things. When I say, ‘Virtue is laudable’, the subject of the sentence is something which I can never touch, taste, smell, see, or otherwise sensuously apprehend : I may see instances of what I call virtuous action, or statues which represent virtue, or the

word printed on paper, but I can never have a sense-perception of virtue itself. I am talking about an idea, something which is completely non-material and mental. This kind of judgment seems to be different from the judgment of perception I make when I say, 'That is a blue banana'; but fundamentally they are the same. For that which is the subject of this sentence is just as non-material, just as mental and ideal, in the proper sense of that word as the adjective of 'idea', as virtue. Until the unsynthesized manifold of sense, supposing it to exist, has somehow become mental I cannot use it in my thinking. For thinking, which becomes explicit in judgment, is about ideas. Ordinary common sense may find this difficult to accept; it may object, 'Do you really mean that when I say, "This orange is sour," I am not talking about the real orange at all, but about my idea of the orange? And what next? Do you mean that by that judgment I mean that my idea of this orange is my idea of sour?' The answer is plain: 'What do you mean by the "real orange"? What do you know about the orange as it is what you call "really", apart, that is, from your perception of it? You can know nothing about it at all except as it comes within the circle of your experience, and when it does that it becomes mental, ideal. Only if it first undergoes this transmutation from material to mental can you talk about it at all; unless and until it is experienced by you you know nothing about it. The orange "in itself", outside experience, cannot even be called an orange; it is a blank nothingness, to which the mind can have no attitude whatever. And, if you care to put it so, it is your idea of this orange that is your idea of sour, as you may readily see when somebody else calls what you would hold to be the same orange sweet; then either the same real, in-itself, orange can be both sour and sweet at the same time, or it is your personal particular idea of it which is sour and the other man's which is

sweet.' Both kinds of judgment are essentially the same, both deal with mental contents, with ideas ; the difference is that the judgment of perception has first to make its material content mental, while the other kind finds its content already mentalized.

How does this help us in our analysis of what happens before and when I make the explicit judgment, 'That is a blue banana'? Into the alchemy by which the material becomes mental we cannot enter, except to suggest that the formulation of the problem in mutually exclusive terms cannot be sound, and to assert that unless there is some factor in common between the two worlds, mental and material, the sense-perceptions which we experience throughout our lives would be an utter impossibility. 'This' is idealized, it is now no longer a material but a mental content ; that is the starting-point of the mental adventure of thinking. But we cannot stop here. By concentrating our attention on it we have torn it from its surroundings, and it compels us to attend to its jagged edges. That compulsion is the obligation we incur when we look at it or begin to think about it at all ; we need not think about it, but if we do we must follow where it leads. We have pushed our way into a connected whole of relations, and the activity of thinking is the examination of the jagged edges and the explicit recognition and formulation of the relations which 'this' has to the rest of the universe. We cannot do as we choose ; we are discovering rather than inventing, tracing out the implications of that which we have chosen as our object and making them explicit in thought and language.

This activity of mental discovery is called inference. We have suggested before that the essence of this process is mental transition or argument from what is seen and present to what is neither seen nor present ; and we can now say, more generally, that inference is the assertion that something may be said of a thing *because* something

else may be said of it ; or, more formally, that S, because M, is P ; that is, that the subject, because it is the mediating term, is the predicate. For instance, to recollect previous examples, it is because I associate the Clarendon Building with the Proctors, because I know that the Proctors hold official interviews in the morning, and because academical dress is worn only for official occasions, that I infer, when I see figures in academical dress outside the Clarendon Building at ten o'clock in the morning, that they are going to see the Proctors : it is because I recognize that consciousness could not exist without the existence of a subject who is conscious that I say, with Descartes, *Cogito ergo sum*. Our present question is, Can we find any mediating term in our judgment, 'That is a blue banana'? Can we say, that is, that when we are making this statement we are inferring, or must we say that we are doing something different? Are perception and its judgments such that they belong to a different class from inference and its judgments, or are they all different examples of the same activity?

The question has only to be asked to find its answer. We should not say, 'That is a blue banana', unless we had some reason for assigning this particular object to a given class ; and we should only do this because we recognized it to possess certain characteristics which correspond to our idea of what a blue banana would be like. It is because we find in the object the size, shape, texture, taste and smell which we know to be those of a banana that we form our tentative judgment, 'This is a banana'. It is because we do not normally associate another characteristic, blue colour, with bananas that we are troubled and make further tests, which eventually convince us that, odd though it may be, this object is both blue and a banana, that is, it is a blue banana. This process of putting a thing in a class because we recognize in it the characteristics of that class goes

on from the moment of our first setting eyes on it. It receives its first stimulus, it may be, from a physical contact between the material object and our senses ; after the mentalization of the object it proceeds continuously, with doubts and discussions, setbacks and advances, until we arrive at our explicit judgment, 'That is a blue banana'. Here, to some extent, the situation is of our own making, for we have taken an interest in the object, when we might have ignored it, and no thinking would then have taken place. We have torn it from its context, and we are under a self-imposed compulsion to examine it and restore it ; to do so, no less than to consider a mathematical argument, is to infer.

The process is continuous. Each step leads to another and that to a third, in unbroken sequence. Somewhere on the way we may, or we may not, make a judgment, an explicit summing-up of the situation we have at present attained. But this is not necessary to the process. Rather it is an arbitrary interference with it. To make plain to ourselves or to communicate to others conclusions which we think surprising, useful, or interesting, we may stop the continuous movement and isolate the situation as it momentarily stands, exactly as a 'still' is extracted from a moving picture. We crystallize or petrify one moment, as Lot's wife was stricken on the road from the cities of the plain, and what we have is a judgment. Or, in another figure, we take a cross-section of a process of inference, and the cross-section is a judgment.

#### iv. *Judgment and Action*

That judgment is not necessarily the end of the process of inference should be clear from our consideration of the moral judgment, where we found that the explicit statement was a stage, which might or might not be openly recognized, on the way to action. And the same

conclusion may be reached by an example in which specifically moral action is not involved, but in which there is visible the same unbroken sequence from the first moment of perceiving to the completion of the process in action.

Suppose that I am walking down the High Street in Oxford, and see outside a certain shop a white sheet of paper with blue marks of various sizes and shapes in various parts of it. I know, as the result of previous experience, that outside this shop one often finds posters announcing the coming fixtures of the University football team ; and when I see the white paper and the blue marks which I know to be characteristic of such advertisements, I at once conclude that this is one of them. At present that is all I can say, for I am some distance away from it, and I am short-sighted. But my interest is sufficiently aroused to approach nearer ; and I am soon able to distinguish five large letters near the top of the placard, which, with hardly a thought, I take to be 'O.U.R.F.C.' ; underneath them is a small blue mark, which I again quickly know to be 'v.' There then comes the element of novelty in the notice, for all that we have yet seen is a common form repeated each week and therefore easy to interpret without much internal argument. There are three large marks, which I have already assumed to be letters, though I cannot be sure what letters they are ; on a closer inspection they prove to be 'R.A.F.' Now I know that those letters are a common abbreviation for the Royal Air Force, and I finally conclude that the University are going to play against the Royal Air Force. But if I were alone it is extremely unlikely that I should make to myself an explicit judgment to that effect. If, on the other hand, there were somebody with me, I might do one of two things, assuming, of course, that I am interested in the information. I might make that explicit judgment, add that I proposed to go and watch the

game, and ask if he would care to accompany me ; or I might, and this is much more likely, indicate the notice with a movement of the hand or head, and simply ask, ‘ What about it ? ’ We have already inferred a great deal, and from this last action he will infer that I am asking him to come with me to see the game, and will answer, ‘ Right ’, or ‘ Afraid I can’t ’, as the case may be. But the chain of inference is not yet complete ; it becomes complete when he and I, or someone else and I, watch that game at the time and place we had inferred from marks on paper, between two teams whose names we had inferred from other marks, and whose individual members were playing for them because of some connection, which we had also inferred, with a fighting force on the one hand and an educational establishment on the other. From perception we have passed, by inference, with or without judgment, to action, continuously and without break. The elements which the subject contributes are obvious enough, expectation of the presence of a poster, previous knowledge of the meaning of abbreviations, local knowledge of places, and a general inclination to watch the game of Rugby football ; to these we shall have to return when we discuss the truth or falsehood of judgments and how we detect either. For the present it is enough to insist that no break occurs in the whole process unless we quite arbitrarily make one, as we do when we make an explicit judgment.

#### v. *Universals*

We must now return to the process which led us to our judgment, ‘ That is a blue banana ’, and we must ask how, supposing that our statement is true, we come to give this name to this particular object of sensuous experience. Why do we call a thing, any thing, by its name ? On what grounds, that is, do we put any particular object into a certain class and call it by a certain

class-name? This must be distinguished from the cognate but not identical question, 'What makes a thing what it is and not something else?' for our former questions are concerned with the relation of the object to ourselves and our attaching a name to it, while the latter is an enquiry into the real nature and constitutive principles of the thing, regarded, as far as possible, apart from any connection it may have with a perceiving, classifying, or naming subject. At the moment we are asking why and on what grounds we attach to this particular object of sense-experience the name 'banana'.

The name is clearly that of a class, to which many distinct particular things belong. The things are not identical, for if they were they would be not many but one unique thing; but they have in common a sufficient number of properties, features, or characteristics to permit them to be called by the same name. And when I am considering objects with a view to classifying them, it is to my ideas of the objects that this name applies. To be able to be classified or named at all the objects must first have become idealized, they must be translated from their material objectivity to mental ideality, for until they have suffered this sea-change they have not yet been included in the circle of my experience and I am unable even to speak of them. The class-name which I give to an object also stands for an idea in or of my mind. (The danger of saying 'in my mind' is that 'in' implies spatial relations which are incongruous with mind, unless mind is taken to be extended, situated in a definite place, and spatially divisible in such a way that things can be in it as they are in a box; while the danger of saying 'of' is that we may be thought to imply that these ideas are simply my own mental constructions.) So that when I mentally put an object into a certain class I am comparing my idea of it with another mental idea, a class-idea, and finding so many characteristics of the class-idea present in the particular

idea that I am entitled to say that the object represented by my particular idea belongs to the class represented by the general class-idea. The words which we use to stand for these class-ideas are called general or universal terms, or, more briefly, if not quite grammatically, universals.

That we have and use these words nobody can deny who speaks or writes a sentence ; it is the question of their origin that has caused so much controversy. Whence come these universals to our minds ? Whence do we derive the class-idea which we represent by the class-name banana, or man, or horse, or gold ? The answer of the Empiricist is, as we should expect, ' From experience '. The complex class-idea is built up by the mind, by abstracting the elements which are seen to be possessed in common by various particular objects, and to the collection of these common elements is given the name which distinguishes them as a class. What we perceive as the simple ideas of yellow colour, hardness, heaviness and so on, are found to exist together in a certain substance, and this collection of qualities is separated from the size or shape which may be present in any particular case, and denominated ' gold '. And that word henceforth will mean to all who use or hear it that complex idea which this collection of qualities causes in the mind of a percipient. The answer, then, to the question, Why do we call this particular object a man ? is that we have been taught by our parents or teachers to call an object with those particular qualities by that particular name ; and if we ask who told them that that was its name we are led gradually backwards until we reach the point at which some one person or assembly of persons made an articulate noise and attached it to a particular set of qualities. This collection of qualities is called the nominal essence of the object so named ; and those who hold that names were simply arbitrarily given to such selected sets of qualities Conceptualists.

We can invent things, they argue, therefore we can invent the ideas of those things, and therefore words to represent those ideas ; new terms have to be invented for new compounds, as any scientific treatise shows, and we invent words like 'grapefruit' and 'seaplane' to stand for new inventions. These are typical, in their origin, of all class-words, even the simplest ; and all, like these, are arbitrary human inventions. (The extreme view, known as Nominalism, that particular things that are called by the same name have only that name, and not even a nominal essence, in common, is now rarely held.)

But there are difficulties in this deceptively simple view ; and the most important of them is that the meanings that different men attach to the same word are not always the same ; or, regarding the same situation from another point of view, that men do not always call the same object by the same name. The nominal essence of an object may vary from percipient to percipient, as Locke himself admits, and as is clear when we compare the nominal essence of a snowdrop as it appears to a blind man and to a botanist ; the collections of qualities which each would mean by the same word are quite different. At this point Locke deserts the Conceptualist position, and admits that to answer this objection it is necessary to consider the real, as opposed to the nominal, essence of the object under consideration. The real essence of an object is that which provides the answer to the second of our two main questions, that, namely, which makes the object what it is. This, on Locke's view of substance, must be unknowable, and the various nominal essences which we attribute to it are our approximations, of greater or less completeness, to this real essence knowable only by God. But to stabilize the varying meanings which men give to the same word we must assume a real meaning even if we can never know what it is ; we are spending our time

offering necessarily incomplete answers to a riddle which only God can solve.

The answer, then, to the question, ‘What makes a man or a banana or a horse what it is?’ is not ‘The fact that we have been told that that is the name we are to pin on to it’, which is a reply to the quite different question, ‘Why do we call a man or a banana or a horse by its name?’ but ‘Man-ness, banana-ness, horse-ness’, the real essence of these objects. The difference between a man and a horse is not one of names or nominal essences; a man would be what he now is and a horse what it now is even if each were called by the name of the other. The name by which it is called makes no difference at all to the real nature of the thing, for that is what it is simply because it is so and not otherwise. There is one class only where nominal and real essences coincide, in the concepts of mathematics; for here the mind of man is completely at liberty to invent, and the whole nature of the invention is to be what it is defined to be. A straight line or a circle really is precisely that which it is nominally defined as being, and nothing more; for the ideas used by the mathematician are, in a quite unique way, inventions of the human mind. They are in no way tied to the physical world, for while there may be, and are, concrete material examples of other human inventions, like grapefruit and seaplanes, there is no such thing in the material world as an example of the definition of a mathematical straight line, since it is impossible, in the material world, to make a line without breadth. A line can be drawn which may be taken to represent the mathematical straight line, but it is not a straight line, in the mathematical and only valid meaning of the words. A straight line is simply the definition of a straight line, its nominal and real essences are one and the same thing.

Plato, recognizing this unique characteristic of mathematical concepts, put them higher on the scale of reality

than particular objects, which are contaminated by their unavoidable connection with unintelligible matter, but lower than the real essences, which he calls Ideas or Forms. This particular gradation of the three kinds of material and mental existences may seem, at first sight, completely topsy-turvy : common sense would expect that actual existing chairs and tables would be recognized as the most real, mathematical concepts, which can be suggested but not exemplified, as partly real, and mental ideas as hardly real at all. But the standard by which Plato measures reality is not solidity or impenetrability in space but intelligibility to mind. Matter, to him, was blind, useless stuff, containing no element of consciousness whatever and therefore capable, by itself, of touching no chord in a perceiving mind ; it was just a blank, meaningless darkness, of which mind could not even become aware until there was imposed on the shapeless matter some intelligible form. That is what has happened to all the objects of the daily world of 'coming-to-be and decaying', and they are all partially penetrable by mind. But only that can be fully comprehensible and therefore fully real which is wholly mental and quite free from the taint of matter and finitude : and the Ideas are so free, comprehensible and real.

Opinions differ on the details of the origin and development of the Doctrine of Ideas. It is thought by some to have been a well-known view which Socrates in Plato's dialogues assumes to be familiar to all his hearers ; others hold that the general theory is Socrates' invention, leaving Plato responsible only for its wider application ; others believe the view to be almost entirely the work of Plato himself. If Plato merely extended an already existing theory, the direction of the generalization can only be inferred from the dialogues themselves ; and it seems on the whole to be the case that Socrates was more particularly interested in the moral Ideas while

Plato recognized that there must also be Ideas of things as undignified as hair, dirt and mud, and of artificial and manufactured things like beds and tables. There is no real difficulty in this ; for no matter how a bed comes to be made and named its being a bed is dictated by the internal principle or real essence 'bed-ness' just as much as the individuality of anything that is not a human invention, for instance the sea or the sun. But at all stages of its development the doctrine stresses two very important points.

The first is that the Ideas are completely mental, non-material, or intelligible, transparent, so to speak, only to pure thought. They are therefore not completely cognizable by human beings so long as the human mind is entangled in a body of material flesh and blood ; only before this conjunction takes place or after it is dissolved can the human mind freely mount to direct and complete communion with the Ideas. This is the reason for Plato's peculiar version of the doctrine of innate ideas, his theory of 'reminiscence', that before we come into this world we have had experience of the Ideas, and while we are here we are constantly being reminded, by particular objects of our sensuous experience, of the Ideas which they imperfectly copy or represent. Only when the mind again becomes disembodied does it return to the state in which apprehension of the Ideas is possible. The fusion of material and mental in human beings makes perception of ordinary objects possible, and at a stroke makes complete knowledge of the wholly mental Ideas impossible. This should be enough to correct the false impression that these Ideas are human inventions, the work of an abstracting human intelligence, or nominal essences. Plato himself explicitly rejects this view : they are *thought* by the human mind, but they are not therefore necessarily mere *thoughts* of the human mind, for if they were they would be fluid, changeable, finite, whereas they are fixed, changeless and eternal.

But, secondly, if they are mental yet not the fictions of human thinking they must be products of some other mind to which such thoughts are as appropriate as human thoughts to human minds. And that is a supposition to which any view of this kind, whether it be called Idealism, from its emphasis on Ideas, or Realism, as opposed to Nominalism, is committed. There must be Mind in the universe other than human minds, for Ideas must be the results of thinking yet are not the result of our thinking. This is what is meant by the thoroughly misleading phrase, ' Ideas laid up in heaven ' ; ideas are not of a nature which would permit their being stored up like apples in a loft ; they must be thought, and they can be thought only by an activity of mind. Hence the necessity of a Workman or God or Absolute Mind to all those who support this doctrine, from Plato to Bradley. Further, this Mind must be of the same general sort as human minds, for its thoughts are to be comprehensible to human minds ; we should be no better off at all unless we could understand the thoughts of this Mind, and grasp, to an increasingly greater extent, their meaning. Here we see the metaphysical reason for an infinite mind, which is parallel to the moral demand for a good God ; and it is not surprising that metaphysical theories of this kind are usually closely associated with Theism in one form or another. For without some support of this kind the whole metaphysical structure collapses.

But if it be granted that there are such things as universals it is asked how they are related to particulars. What is the relation between these three horses, one white, one brown, and one black, on the one hand, and horse-ness on the other ? It is obvious, though it has often been forgotten, that horse-ness is not a horse. Recollection of this simple truth, and recognition of the difference between conceiving and imagining, would have prevented Berkeley and many others from con-

fusing triangularity with particular triangles : he asks, attacking Locke, how he is to have an ‘idea of a triangle which is neither oblique nor rectangle, equilateral, equicrural nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once’? <sup>1</sup> This he obviously cannot do ; but nobody was asking him to do it. He is trying, in vain, to conflate these possible properties of particular triangles into one imagined *particular* triangle, and, of course, it is impossible : but he must not conclude from this failure that universals do not exist, or exist but as phantasms of sickly brains ; for he has not been thinking the concept of a universal triangularity at all, but imagining or making a mental picture of a particular triangle into which he has tried to fit all the properties which he knows to be typical of triangles in general. But triangularity is not a triangle, and until this difference between thinking universals and imagining particulars is plainly recognized, together with the consequent fact that a universal is not a mental picture, dangerous confusion is inevitable.

What is the relation between particular horses, perceived or imagined, and the horse-ness which, being present in all of them, makes them all horses ? What is the nature of this presence ? It cannot be the case that the universal is totally present in or possessed by each particular, for if this were so the universal, whole and complete, would be in many places at once, which is impossible. If, on the other hand, it were divided among them so that each contained a part, it would nowhere and never be a unity. Nor, indeed, is it possible that a *quantity*, larger or smaller, whole or partial, of what is utterly non-quantitative should be present in anything. Nor can the particular be a likeness, copy, or imitation of an archetype, though this solution would preserve the unity of the universal, for particular and universal could only be called alike because they possessed

<sup>1</sup> ‘Introduction to the Principles of Human Knowledge’, § 13.

some quality in common, and this would require that both were particulars of some higher universal, and so on in an indefinite regress.

The difficulty comes from trying to explain the relation between universal and particular in terms of some other relation, of presence, of quantitative division, or of resemblance. Might it not be wiser to recognize this relation itself as unique and like nothing else? The relations of quantitative sharing or of resemblance cannot be expressed in terms of other relations; why should it be supposed that this quite fundamental relation between universal and particular can? If it is recognized as unique and incapable of that sort of explanation that comes of being expressed in terms of something else, we shall be content to say that among the relations which we know is this one between universal and particular: there it is, and to try to express it in some other way is to invite the failure that must attend the attempt to define a thing as other than it is.

*Consult further :*

Plato. ‘Parmenides.’

F. H. Bradley. ‘The Principles of Logic’, esp. chap. I and the Terminal Essays on Inference and Judgment.

B. Bosanquet. ‘The Essentials of Logic.’

## CHAPTER IX

### TRUTH

#### i. *Judgment and Truth*

We have now reached the stage when it is our pressing duty to give some account of a word which has been used without explanation from our very first pages onwards. We began by distinguishing hypothetical from categorical truth, and we have often been compelled to use the words 'true' and 'truth' without stopping to examine their meaning : this reproach we must now try to remove.

And indeed, there is this excuse, that this is the first time that we have been in a position to discuss truth, for we have but lately become acquainted with that which alone can be true or false. Nothing can be true or false except a judgment, a statement, or an assertion (taking those terms as synonymous). Not until I make an explicit statement do I enter the region of truth and falsity. Facts, points of view, actions, feelings, perceptions, have, by themselves, nothing to do with truth or falsity ; only judgments which are about them or embody them can be called true or false. Before we reach the point of making an explicit assertion we are in the realm not of truth but of the certainty which is appropriate to sense-perception. A sense-perception cannot be either true or false, but it is always certain. That is to say, nobody can validly deny that I have the perceptions that I directly have. They can argue about and contradict assertions that I make on the basis of my sense-perceptions or conclusions which I draw from

them : but if I put out my hand towards a fire I feel hot, or have a sense-perception of heat ; and nobody can possibly deny that or validly argue about it. That I have that feeling of heat is certain, undeniable. But it *is* also, as it stands, barren ; it is not until I go on with the process of inference which it begins that this sense-perception is of any use to me or anyone else. And it is as soon as I do this, as soon as I go out from my warm private world of sense-certainty, that I am liable to be told that I am not speaking the truth. As soon as I make the judgment, ‘I am hot’, I am open to contradiction, for I am then making a statement about something which is not a purely private affair ; I am saying that a public word, ‘hot’, applies to me at this moment. And that statement may be either true or false.

It is precisely of such judgments that what we call knowledge consists. We know *that* 2 plus 2 makes 4, or *that* Julius Cæsar was killed on the Ides of March, or *that* stealing is wrong. If we suppose that there are facts which these statements represent, we can get no nearer, so to speak, to the facts than these judgments about them. The facts are not our knowledge ; at the facts we can never arrive, because they are quite different in their nature from knowledge, which is, if it is anything at all, a product of mental activity, of knowing, as judgments are of judging. It helps us not at all to think of knowledge as separable from and independent of somebody’s knowing of it, as if it could spread and increase without the assistance of the minds which know. It may be crystallized into judgments, as we have suggested, when we regard the process of inference from the specially intellectual point of view and interest ourselves, to the exclusion of all other considerations, in the forms taken, at a given stage, by the process we are watching ; and we may then isolate the forms as judgments and consider them apart from the activity which created them. We

must do so if we propose to discuss their truth or falsity, but we must remember that we are doing so.

There is one last preliminary to be attended to before we ask the question of jesting Pilate. That there is in all judgment and therefore in all knowledge an element which does not come from experience we have recognized. But it is not enough to admit that this antecedent element exists, whether in one special part of the judgment or in the very possibility of experience itself; there is, further and more positively, a definite kind of knowledge which is independent of any appeal to experience whatever. In experience we find out something that we did not know before, and affirm a new predicate of the subject of our judgment; so any judgment that we make as the result of experience may be called not only empirical or *a posteriori*, but also synthetic, by which is intended not the commercial meaning of the word but that some new predicate is attached to the subject, a predicate which I could not have known merely from my previous acquaintance with the subject. And it is clear that most of our judgments are of this kind, as, for example, when I say 'The cat is on the mat'; for there is nothing in the nature of 'cat' from which I might be led, apart from the experience of seeing it on the mat, to know that it would be there. In fact, the classical British philosophers denied that there was or could be any kind of judgment or knowledge except this. But, being empirical, it is necessarily involved in the contingencies which we have seen to attend all appeals to experience, and though it is admittedly informative its detractors point out that from experience alone we can never derive any knowledge which is necessarily and unquestionably true. There is therefore the opposite claim, that there exists a kind of knowledge which is altogether necessary and universal, quite independent of being grounded in any experience at all, because quite independent of experience itself; knowledge, in fact, which comes before

experience not merely temporally but logically, which is not *a posteriori* but *a priori*. This, by contrast with the informative knowledge of experience, is analytical ; that is, it extracts from the subject one particular predicate, which it already possesses and affirms it, as, for instance, when I say, 'The three interior angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles'. This is a proposition which I can make without ever having actual experience of a triangle (which as a matter of fact I never can have), simply from the definition of 'triangle', from which I deduce the sum of its internal angles. That this kind of knowledge is necessary and universal is plain from its *a priori* nature ; whether there are triangles in the actual world or not, whether I am colour-blind or not, whether the ordinary conditions of experience are fulfilled or not, this statement will be true about all possible triangles : the question is, Granting that it exists, is it in any way fruitful ? If it merely affirms some quality or property which the subject must by definition possess, what is added to our knowledge of that or any other subject by the explicit affirmation ? On the one hand, then, is the empirically-derived synthetic knowledge, which, though useful and informative, is not necessary but contingent : on the other, the *a priori* knowledge, quite independent of all experience, which, though necessarily and universally valid, is not informative. The philosophy of Kant is the attempt to find judgments which will combine the more valuable features of both these kinds, and be not only informative but necessary, both synthetic and *a priori*.

## ii. *Truth as Correspondence*

We are now in a position to ask on what grounds we call any of these judgments, analytic or synthetic, *a priori* or *a posteriori*, true. The natural answer is that truth is a relation between the set of ideas which we express in a judgment and the actual facts which our judgment

is held to represent ; the statement is true, in short, if it corresponds to the facts. There is a dualism, it is assumed, between certain concrete physical facts of the outside world on the one hand and our ideas about them, expressed in judgments, on the other, two sets or organizations, the one common and public, the other private : if the private statement corresponds to or represents the complex of public fact the judgment is true ; if not, it is false. If, for instance, I say that the sun is twenty million miles from the earth I am making a statement which I believe to correspond to an actual fact, namely, the measurable distance between the two bodies : I am in this case making an erroneous statement, because *actually* the distance is ninety-two million miles. My estimate is, as it were, put alongside the actual state of physical nature which it is held to represent and found not to fit, to be, in fact, seventy-two million miles too short. Whereas, if somebody else says, 'The sun is ninety-two million miles from the earth ', his judgment is called true because that does actually represent the observed facts and the measured distance. If I say, 'The cat is on the mat ', my statement is called true if a certain physical animal represented by the word 'cat' is, in the public world of sense-perception, situated on a piece of material stuff which we call a mat ; but false if that animal is in either of the places which we call on the window-sill or up a laburnum tree. On the one side is the fact, on the other my idea of it or my statement about it ; if, when the one is superimposed on the other, they are congruent, my statement is true ; if not, false.

This seems to be a very straightforward, sensible and adequate view ; and it undoubtedly is the view implied in most ordinary and unreflecting use of the words true and false. But a little examination reveals one fundamental defect, which in various forms we have encountered before. The correspondence-theory is built round

a dualism which we have seen to be fatal to anything that comes near it, the dualism between things physical and things mental. And that, in this particular case, in two ways. First, it is impossible to explain how the actual physical fact of the cat's being spatially situated on the mat produces either the true statement that it is there or the false statement that it is on the window-sill. Secondly, it is as impossible to superimpose on the actual physical fact the mental attitude (of asserting or judging) towards it, and expect to be able to find them congruent or different, as it is to apply a foot-rule to virtue : the two things that are being compared belong to completely incommensurable, because mutually exclusive, worlds. The first of these objections we may ignore, for enough has been said about it in other connections : the second is more important and deserves a little more consideration.

It amounts, in brief, to this, that before two things can be compared they must be comparable ; to be comparable they must be essentially of the same nature, whether it be material or mental ; but the judgment which is one of the things to be compared is mental ; therefore, in order to be comparable with it, the other of the two things to be compared must be mental too. Before my judgment can be called true or false, therefore, it is necessary that the facts which it is alleged to represent should be not the material physical facts of a physical cat on a physical mat, but something and somehow mental. That may mean one of two things, either that the whole of the outside world of 'fact' is composed of mental or spiritual elements, or that that with which any judgment is compared in a consideration of its truth is itself another judgment or set of judgments. The former alternative we have encountered before, the latter leads us to another view of the nature of truth which we must presently consider.

For the present, and against the correspondence view of truth in particular, there is a fatal objection to be

urged. A judgment is true if it corresponds to the facts, be their nature what it may. But how are we to know whether it corresponds or not? How is this correspondence recognized? It can only be recognized by another judgment. That is, when we ask whether or not the statement, 'The cat is on the mat', is true, our answer will be, 'The statement "The cat is on the mat" is true since that statement corresponds to the facts'; that is, it is true that the statement 'The cat is on the mat' is true. But *why* is it true that it is true that the statement, 'The cat is on the mat,' is true? Because it represents the facts that it represents the facts that the cat is on the mat; and so on, in an indefinite regress, because the correspondence is not something that happens or grows, but something that is the result of the contemplation of a set of facts by a thinking mind. Before any judgment can be known to be true there must be inserted, between it and the facts that it is held to represent, a further judgment that that judgment of correspondence is a true judgment of correspondence, and between this further judgment and the facts that it in turn is held to represent another, and so on indefinitely. This objection is fatal to any theory of judgment which, like Bradley's, defines judgment as the act which refers an ideal content to a reality beyond the act,<sup>1</sup> or any theory of the truth of judgments which involves a reference to anything which the judgment is held to represent. On these terms the decision about the truth or falsehood of a judgment can never be made, because before this act of deciding can begin there is an indefinite series of similar judgments to be made first; than which no situation could be more hopeless.

### iii. *Truth as Coherence*

We are entitled, in the face of these difficulties, to search elsewhere for the distinguishing mark of truth,

<sup>1</sup> 'Principles of Logic', Bk. I, c. I, § 10.

and in doing so we at once come across the view that truth consists in coherence, that judgments which are coherent are true, and judgments which are incoherent are untrue. It should be plainly understood that it is not asserted merely that judgments which are not coherent cannot be true, as if coherence were a preliminary qualification which judgments must possess before they could begin to be talked of as true or false ; coherence is meant as a synonym for truth, so that all judgments which are coherent are, by the very fact of their being so, true. How does this touchstone help us when it is applied to the statement, recognized as true, that two and two make four, and to the statement, made by the lunatic and recognized as false by everybody else, 'I am a tea-pot' ?

Coherence does not mean logical consistency ; for two reasons, first, that the mere avoidance of logical inconsistency is not enough to make coherence, and secondly, that, if it were, to be consistent a statement must be consistent *with* something else, and to mention this is to open the door to the correspondence-theory. Can this objection not also be brought against coherence ? Must a statement not cohere with something else before it can be called coherent ? This last question is verbally met by pointing out the difference between cohesion, which is the internal sticking together of one substance, and adhesion, which is the external sticking of that substance to something else. Can we follow this verbal clue in the hope that we may be led to a satisfactory definition of coherence, avoiding on the one hand the morass of meaninglessness and on the other the gaping jaws of Correspondence ?

The coherent is the conceivable. This, as by now we need not, perhaps, be told, does not mean that the coherent is the imaginable or the picturable. It is possible to imagine a man as a tea-pot, as, for instance, in fancy dress ; but to conceive him as a tea-pot is quite a different matter. For the lunatic's statement to be true it must

be possible to think out the full meaning of 'I' and the full meaning of 'tea-pot' and to find that there is that degree of similarity between them that will permit us to identify them. We are not asserting that 'I' and 'tea-pot' must be compared and found to correspond, but that the meaning of the statement must be developed from the inside into an internally coherent system. If this is possible the judgment is true : if, as in this case, there are elements within the judgment which refuse to harmonize with each other, the judgment is false.

But how far is this development and expansion into a system to be carried ? Where can we stop and say, 'There, that is a coherent system, so that judgment is true' ? We find, to our dismay, that even the simplest judgment, when its internal development begins, expands with a strength and vigour that are beyond our powers to check, taking in more and more of our knowledge and experience, dragging us with it into affirmation or denial, and finally leaving us exhausted and breathless as it poises itself for a final flight from the experience we know into the absolute experience of God. Its growth into an internal explicitness of conceivable coherence soon brings it into contact with many things which, on the surface, are outside and apart from itself. My simple statement that two and two make four involves me at once in a discussion of number in general, if the full meaning of my statement is to become apparent, and that involves views about both space and time ; before the misguided statement, 'I am a tea-pot', can be called incoherent, because inconceivable, reasons of space, time, identity, personality, definition, existence itself, must be brought forward. So that it is no exaggeration to say that any single statement, if its whole meaning is examined, leads, by a path perhaps tedious but quite unavoidable, to a whole system of knowledge and truth. Unless this expansion occurs and is carried as far as it will go, it is impossible to say whether or

not the statement is conceivable, whether or not its parts fit into each other in an intelligible whole, impossible, that is, to say whether it is true or false.

But here again there are difficulties. If the lunatic says, thinks and believes that he is a tea-pot, and does his best to act as one (and a china tea-pot could do no more), what right has anyone else to say that his statement of his own nature is false? We call it false because neither in looks nor in behaviour does he resemble the tea-pots we know. But we are in danger either of relapsing into a correspondence-theory or of taking as the standard of coherence nothing more than public opinion. Yet how is this to be avoided? His system, if it is to expand to its widest conceivable limits, must include other people and their opinions. If he is a Solipsist, of course, his position is quite unassailable, for neither other people nor, *a fortiori*, their opinions, exist. But in any other case, some account must be taken both by him and by us who are judging the truth or falsity of his statement, of the common world in which he lives and which he must include in his system of judgment. But this is not all. It is reasonable to suppose that if a judgment expands into a system that system will be a system of judgments. And that system, if its truth be in question, will be composed not only of the judgments of people now living, but of all past and future makers of judgments, even, eventually, of God's judgments. Again we are face to face with the Absolute, led thither by the demand that if our judgments are to have any complete conceivability they cannot stop short at the particular judgments of finite minds, but must go on until all time, all space and all human minds are swallowed up in eternity, infinity and the Absolute. By what right may we stop anywhere else? Only if this or that is true in the eye, or mind, of God can its truth here and now be asserted. And since we can hardly hope to know the mind of God our position is a little

hopeless. It may have been no more than this faith in coherence that Descartes meant when he affirmed his belief that God was a good God and would not deceive him, or that Science means by the rationality of the universe. Not only, as we have seen, in the sphere of morals, but as a ground for universals, there is a need for some mind behind and beyond all phenomena, to guarantee stability, to make life more than a meaningless joke and to make thinking possible ; here again is the same need, to make knowledge and truth possible. Everywhere there is a demand for rational mind.

And if, suspecting that God or the Absolute is only a name easy to invoke when the difficulties of a theory become insoluble, and a name which will aid us very little in our search for truth, we reject this remedy and impatiently come back to earth, we find another problem awaiting us in the subjective nature of judging and the consequent incompleteness of all our attempts, however well-intentioned, to reach a coherent system. If I made the statement, 'The railway-fare from Oxford to London is eight shillings', to a foreigner who was quite unacquainted with the geography of England or the approximate fares on English trains he would have no grounds for forming an opinion on the truth or falsity of my judgment. He would not know whether or not it was likely to be true, and it is on likeliness that we build our provisional opinions about the truth or error of statements ; for if we say that something is likely we mean simply that in such expansion, limited but for present purposes adequate, as we have had time to observe in a minute or two conceivability has not yet broken down. But if I had cause to make the same remark in a room full of my Oxford colleagues, they would probably begin by saying, 'Well, yes . . .' and go on to point out that my statement was true except for travelling first-class, by excursion trains, or on days on which there are cheap return fares ; they might be

cautious enough (some of them are) to say that that was the fare the last time they travelled, but it might have been changed since then. That is, my judgment is partially but not wholly true, it is the truth but not the whole truth. A great many of our ordinary judgments are of this kind, coloured by the personal habits and interests of the judger, and, so far as he is concerned, true. They are true, that is, for him.

The internal development which we demand to produce coherence must be the development of a judgment in the mind of an individual judger ; the judgment cannot be cut off and left like a tomato to ripen in a window. And since this is so the expansion of the judgment into a conceivable coherent system will necessarily take a form to which the past mental history and present interests of the judger are relevant. It is difficult otherwise to account for the differences of opinion which occur even among honest and well-disposed people about the truth of judgments. It is only when a certain form of words states explicitly the stage reached by my process of inference that I make a judgment at all ; and except in extraordinary circumstances I should not make that statement unless I believed it to be true, or at any rate wished to give the impression that I believed it to be true. If I am wrong my error is due to a shortcoming in myself, a lack of completeness in the development of my coherence ; and I am corrected by somebody who 'knows better', whose system of coherence has developed into a wider circle than mine. But I am judging to the best of my knowledge and belief, to the greatest extent permitted by the narrowness of my circle of experience and coherence. If I encounter nobody whose system is more developed than mine, and so remain uncorrected, my judgment continues, to the utmost of my powers of discrimination, to be true for me ; if it is afterwards seen, in the light of wider experience, to be false, was it false always, even when I did not and could not know

it to be so, or was it true once but false now ? If what was once true can become false by the growth of the subject's experience the truth is not stable but variable with the varying degree of experience on the part of the subject : if what I once thought to be true and could not help thinking true was really false all the time, how can I ever distinguish between true and false sufficiently to say that anything at all is either true or false ? In neither case can it be safe for me, an individual finite subject, to make a judgment about truth at all ; only omniscience can judge, and only the judgment of omniscience can be true.

#### iv. *Pragmatism*

Is the situation, then, quite hopeless ? And must we confess that we can find no satisfactory reason why any one statement should be called false and any other true ? We have briefly considered the two most widely held views of the nature of truth and found in both difficulties which may not seem to all minds to be enough to damn the theories but which are at least enough to make either untenable without the backing of a detailed metaphysical doctrine, either of Dualism, Subjectivism or Absolutism. Into a philosophical sky clouded with these doubts, questionings and despairs there flashed, in the dying years of the nineteenth century, the meteor Pragmatism. Its arrival and subsequent career have been the most exciting events of a rather dull period in the history of philosophy, and whether it be indeed a new star to guide mankind or a trumpery flash of magnesium ribbon, temporarily blinding but momentary only, remains to be seen. The rich promises of new discoveries that Pragmatism holds out may prove to be illusory, but there comes in its wake a rush of fresh air which can do no harm in the permanently dusty chambers of the mansion of philosophy.

Pragmatism is not merely, or even mainly, a theory

of the nature of truth. Its propounders and supporters regard it not even as a philosophical system of any kind, but rather as an attitude towards philosophical problems of all kinds. To look at things pragmatically is, in their view, the opposite of looking at them in too rationalistic or intellectualistic a way, and they tend to do harm to their positive thesis by intemperate and indiscriminate abuse of those who are, on their own showing, to be pitied rather than blamed. The pragmatic attitude, as its name is enough to show, is essentially practical rather than theoretical ; what matters about a theory is not its logical consistency or its appeal to reason, but its practical value and consequences. William James does not hesitate to insist on the ‘ cash-value in experiential terms ’<sup>1</sup> of a theory or a truth. All intellectual investigation, all rational thinking, all theoretical exercise, must, in the end, have a practical reference, all thinking is for the sake of a future action ; and this practical reference determines the worth or worthlessness of the theory.

It is easy enough to deduce from this general view the Pragmatist’s attitude to the problem of truth. That is true which is useful, which ‘ works ’, which enables a man to move with more freedom and fulness in the bewildering mazes of experience. Pragmatists appeal to us, or command us, not to put too low or sordid an interpretation on these statements. They do not mean that they can hold to be true what they like, or what it is pleasant for them to believe ; the question they ask about a judgment is, ‘ What concrete difference will its being true make in any one’s actual life ? ’ And on the answer to this question depends the truth or otherwise of the judgment. It is clear that, on this view, we were wrong in asserting that only judgments could be true or false ; ideas, names even, are part of our experience, and ‘ true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify ’. So the truth of an idea or a

<sup>1</sup> James, ‘ Pragmatism ’, c. vi.

statement is not a quality that it possesses from all time and to all time ; truth is something that *happens* to an idea when it is assimilated into somebody's experience and makes some concrete difference to his actual life. The emphasis is always on practice and against theory, unless the theory itself leads to practical consequences.

Now there is undoubtedly something of value in this general view, but whether it provides a reasonable theory of truth is quite another matter. Of course, the Pragmatist is a very difficult person to argue with on usual terms, so different are his methods and aims from those of his opponents. But there can be no doubt that if this is what he means by truth he is using the word in a very different sense from the rest of the world, and the practical consequences of his so doing should, on his own view, make him the more careful. For it is not usual to suppose that the *truth* of a statement depends on its practical consequences. Relevance, usefulness, applicability, are all qualities which judgments may possess in greater or less degree ; but they are not normally supposed to be synonymous with truth ; for a statement may have all these properties and yet be false in the ordinary sense of the word, or none of them and yet be true. This is precisely what Pragmatists deny, but it may be questioned whether they do themselves or their theory in its wider application any service by insisting on this definition of truth and the equation of it to usefulness. For, first, of what are normally called truths of history or judgments about the past, this doctrine can give no account at all. For example, it is normally taught and believed that the battle of Marathon was fought in the year 490 B.C. ; but it has lately been proved by a distinguished Oxford historian, to the satisfaction of himself and some others, that it was fought in 491 B.C. It would normally be said that the one of these dates must be right and the other wrong, or possibly both wrong and some other right ; at any rate it would be

said that there was a right date for the battle of Marathon, whether anybody knew it or not, some position in time at which it actually happened, and therefore the possibility of making a judgment about it that would be a true judgment. But on pragmatic terms, it would not be correct to say this ; it would not even be correct to say that it used to be true that it was fought in 490 B.C., and is now true that it was fought in 491 B.C., though that position might be defended ; the only statement that the Pragmatist can make about such a question is that the problem of truth or falsity does not arise, unless by deciding in the one way or the other we are going to make some difference to somebody's actual life. It might, for instance, make some difference to chronologists and historians, but for the rest of us it simply makes no difference which of these two dates we accept as the true date of the battle ; and in these circumstances neither date *is* true. Neither, equally, is false ; the question does not arise. Now it may not be relevant to my present life to decide which year it actually was that saw the defeat of Persia, but I should not expect my interest or lack of it to make or not make it true that this event did occur at a recognizable date in the history of the world.

There is a similar difficulty about statements which do not relate to historical fact, but to matters of present and permanent interest. If, to take as an example a subject on which the opinions of Pragmatists differ, the two contradictory statements, 'Christianity is the true religion' and 'Christianity is a degraded superstition', are made, and we are asked to decide which of them is true, we can apply, with greater or less success, the tests we have found in correspondence and coherence. The Pragmatist, on the other hand, can only decide which of the statements is true by considering the bearing of both on the actual living of actual people, by estimating the amount of difference each makes to him who holds

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it. It is not a question of the effect on the experiencing agent of what is normally called the truth or falsity of these statements ; that truth or falsity itself can only be discovered by seeing what effect, in practical consequences, the statements and the views they represent actually have. And here again there seems to be no meaning in the question. The practical consequences of believing either statement to be true may be quite negligible ; or they may be, and often are, of a precisely opposite kind from what might have been expected. The *kind* of effect these beliefs have on their believers is not the point ; the Pragmatist does not say that that view is true which has certain desired consequences. But that they should have an effect of some kind is necessary to their being true ; and, presumably, the greater the effect the greater the truth.

But any such discussion seems to be quite irrelevant to the question of truth in any ordinary sense ; to be, in fact, about something quite different. And while the Pragmatist may claim that he has at last directed the attention of mankind away from intellectualist vanities towards the real problem, he must remember that, on his own terms, a definition of truth which is misleading, or even sufficiently unusual to be of no practical consequence, cannot be true. The emphasis with which Pragmatism attacks the abstractions of previous theories, of all kinds, is wholly admirable ; and the sincere attempt to get away from dogmatism to a more dynamic view of the nature and growth of truth deserves sympathy ; but Pragmatism remains an attitude towards philosophical problems in general rather than an acceptable solution of those problems, and particularly of the problem of truth.

*Consult further :*

- F. H. Bradley. ‘Essays on Truth and Reality.’  
H. H. Joachim. ‘The Nature of Truth.’  
William James. ‘Pragmatism.’

## CHAPTER X

### APPEARANCE AND REALITY

#### i. *Appearance*

We must now attempt to pick up a few of the threads we have left loose and try to work the tangled skein into as tidy a whole as we can. Perhaps we shall best be able to do this if we ask and try to answer the question, To what do our judgments, true or false, refer? Or, if this seems to presuppose a view about the nature of truth and judgment which we have no right to hold, we may widen the question into the general enquiry, What are our judgments about? We shall find that these questions involve not only the nature of truth, judgment and perception, but the further underlying ultimate metaphysical problem of the nature of reality itself.

The first possible answer to our questions is that we perceive and judge about facts. And, on further elaboration, that is held to mean that when we perceive or judge we are concerned with reality, the actual things that exist for anybody and everybody in the public world of experience. But this statement must be analysed. In any act of perception, as we have from the first insisted, there must be two elements, a subject and an object. That is not in doubt, the difficulties begin when we attempt to define more clearly what we mean by the object. We may mean a mental state of the subject; but we have found that this view, though perhaps the only consistent and tenable one, does not account for all the facts of experience: we may mean

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that the object is an idea caused by and representative of an unknown and unknowable substantial thing ; but we have seen the obvious difficulties of this view. But we may also mean a third thing, which Bishop Berkeley meant.

Berkeley, carrying on the empirical tradition of Locke, but by no means satisfied with all of his predecessor's views, stated a theory of perception which has been, for better or worse, profoundly influential in all later philosophy. Instead of taking the idea which, on Locke's view, is the only thing the mind can perceive, as being representative of a material thing beyond, Berkeley proposes to take the facts as he finds them, in true empirical fashion, and invent or postulate nothing whatever. He therefore accepts the word 'idea', but gives to it the meaning phenomenon, appearance, or object of sense-perception ; in fact, what we have been calling the object for a subject is what Berkeley means by 'idea'. But the great difference between his and any earlier view is that he does not see any reason why he should go on to assume a material substance behind and beyond this idea, causing it and resembled by it. He stops at the stage of the sensuously-perceived idea, refusing to go below it to matter as a substratum supporting or producing it. We can know nothing about matter ; we cannot possibly perceive it ; why should we suppose it to be there ? Why not rather confine ourselves to what we know we have got, namely these ideas or sense-appearances ? Of them the external world of our perceptions is composed, and they are not produced by matter, which is essentially passive and unproductive, but are the visual language in which God speaks to us. Spirit, not matter, is the one active agency in the universe, matter is a useless supposition without evidence or usefulness.

Berkeley's position is in danger of being misunderstood. When it is said that he has removed matter from the

world there is a danger that a refutation of his view may be attempted after the manner of Doctor Johnson, who thought he had answered Berkeley when he kicked a stone and found that his foot encountered something painfully hard. Berkeley does not mean that if we go to sit on a chair we may, indeed must, find ourselves sitting through it because there is no matter there : he means that the chair *is* precisely what we perceive, and no more. External things *are* the collections of sense-impressions as which they are perceived by us. Nor is Berkeley's doctrine as paradoxical as it seems at first sight to be. The external world is left alone ; it remains exactly as we perceive it. Berkeley simply accepts it and announces that that is all there is to it, there is no mysterious world of material substance ; things are what they appear as, they are their appearance.

And we may extend this appearance-theory from sense-perception to those other objects of the mind's attention, thoughts about truth. Why should we suppose that there is one fixed immutable eternal truth, of which our truths are copies or approximations, as sense-ideas are of their material causes? Why should we invent a Truth, which we can never know any more than we can know material substance, to produce our truths? In this internal mental experience, just as in external sensuous experience, there are two elements, a subject and an object. Without a thinking subject there can be no thinking, just as without a perceiving subject there is no possibility of perceiving ; but why should we, in the one case any more than in the other, assume a third factor, the unknowable substratum in which our truths inhere? Just as chairs and tables are what they are perceived as, so truths would be what they are thought as.

It follows, of course, on this view, that the subject becomes the predominant partner in the acts of perceiving and thinking. The perceptions of each perceiving subject are inalienably his own, for no other percipient can

occupy precisely his point of view ; and each of us then lives in an ego-centric world of his own sense-appearances and thought-appearances, content that there should be no mysterious un-experienceable universe of material things or eternal truths to which his own adventures of sense and thought approximate. We live our finite lives here, in space and time, surrounded by appearances, some sensuous, some mental, some, our neighbours, apparently compounded of both ; it is not hopeless surrender but intelligent acquiescence to hold that things really are as they appear to each one of us to be. That involves the admission that 'things', so-called, can be at the same time different, according to the views of them that different perceivers have. But this sounds absurd because the terms of the statement are such as the theory we are considering would not allow. Things *are* as they are perceived, so that what is normally called 'a tree' is not one material thing capable of presenting various views of itself to various perceiving subjects ; *it* is not anything except those various views that various percipients have ; that is, there is no one tree, but there are as many tree-appearances as there are percipients. And further, on Berkeley's view, the tree-appearance to the sense of touch is not the same idea as the tree-appearance to the sense of sight. This is obvious enough if it is firmly remembered what he means by idea, and only absurd-sounding when it is misleadingly said that the tree which I touch and the tree which I see are not the same thing ; these terms are simply not applicable to Berkeley's theory, and the scores that can be made at his expense when it is paraphrased in such language are irrelevant trifling.

## ii. *Reality*

It is, however, possible to hold a genuinely opposite theory, both of the world of sense and of the world of thoughts and truth. The justification of the assumption

that in sense-experience there is some *thing* there to see, may take one of two forms, which may be called respectively Realist (with or without the opprobrious epithet ‘naïve’, opprobrious and tautologous, for all Realism is naïve), and Constructive or Selective. The Realist view says that what we ordinarily call things exist, indifferent to our relations with them, in splendid multiplicity; we occasionally come across them, when they come within our field of sense or when we come within their field of influence, and then we may perceive them. But our perceiving does not affect them, they continue to be exactly what they were, and go on being what they were after we have ceased to perceive them. They are solid and enduring, a collection of brute facts among which we make our painful way, and which we cannot help recognizing for what they are when we see them. There was a table here before I came into this room, there still is a table here, exactly the same table, now, and when I go away there will still be the same table here. To this view, with its necessary subsidiaries, primary and secondary qualities, we need do no more than ask the now tedious questions, ‘How do you know?’ ‘How can you know?’ Along this line the appearance stops all further progress, and whether Locke’s simpler or Kant’s more complicated attempts to get round this formidable obstacle are followed the result is the same, utter failure.

The Constructive, or Selective, view tries to be more helpful. It starts from sense-data, and proceeds in some such way as this: It cannot be denied that when I am face to face with a table I have a sense-datum of it, say a sense-datum of sight. Now if I walk round the table I get a series of sense-data, each of which resembles very closely those next to it, although the first may differ very greatly from the fiftieth. Then, when I have completed my circuit I have what can be called a ‘family’ of sense-data, from their resemblance and connection,

and that is what *the table* is, a family of sense-data. There are several objections to this view. The word 'sense-datum' is a two-edged sword. 'Datum', on the one hand, implies, as a perfect passive participle, that it is given by something, in this case the real table : what is given is not the table, what is given is something given by the table. In the very word 'sense-datum' the whole question is begged, for it assumes that there is a real thing, a table, there which gives, actively, what is given. But 'sense-datum' implies something else. It implies that this which is given by the table is given to sense, in this case my sight. So the percipient is not left out altogether ; indeed, the table *is* a family of data given to sight. But is the table a different table when it is given to the sight of a short-sighted man from the table it is when it is given to a normally-sighted man, different when the person who happens to be seeing it has jaundice ? Is there not behind this theory too the assumption of a materially substantial table, a core of something which stays anchored while the journey round it is made and on to which the series of sense-data can be nailed, a *table* round which we walk ?

But it is particularly in the sphere of thought and truth that that rationalism which so angers Pragmatists has been led to talk of a Reality, transcending and unifying our particular experiences of appearances. It is, to rationalists, incredible that the real nature of things should be as fragmentary, contradictory and illusory as our experience of appearances is, so dependent on the particular state of mind, or body, of the particular thinker, so apt to lead our thinking into incoherence and absurdity. All the elements of our experience, space, time, causation, individual personality, finitude in general, lead, when seriously and bravely thought out, to such flagrant contradictions that it is unthinkable that they should be real. They are all appearances, not in the sense in which we have been using the word to mean idea or

phenomenon, but in a sense disparaging to anything called by it in contrast to reality. This reality is a unity, infinite, unlimited in any way, altogether free from the spatial, temporal and causal context in which our finite minds are compelled to work, a majestic eternity. It is, according to personal taste, the Absolute or God.

The rationalist's ground for this explanatory construction is to be found in logic. There are three recognized Laws of Thought, the law of identity, that A is A, the law of contradiction, that A cannot both be B and not be B, and the law of excluded middle, that A either is or is not B. These three can be reduced to one, the law of contradiction, that contradictory propositions about the same thing cannot both be true. Armed with this so-called law of thought, which actually is a statement of the fact that we cannot think contradictory propositions, just as the so-called laws of nature are nothing more than statements that things are observed to behave in certain ways, the rationalist examines his experience and its necessary framework or context. He finds that he himself both is and is not one same identical person ; that time and space are both finite and not finite (or at least he can find no reason for not affirming that they are both) ; that matter both exists and does not exist ; and that the whole finite stuff of experience, including himself as a finite experiencing subject, leads his thought into irresolvable contradictions or antinomies. He then feels compelled to say, 'These contradictory propositions can and must be made about finite experience ; but according to the law of contradiction such a state of affairs is unthinkable ; reality cannot be self-contradictory ; therefore all finite human experiences must be other than real, they must be appearances.'

It is obvious that the whole case rests on the application to the real world of what is explicitly called and claimed to be a law of thought. The human mind cannot think contradictory propositions : if it appears

to do so it is simply not thinking. But is there any evidence that the world of things, reality, or whatever we choose to call what is external to our minds, behaves in a way that is amenable to the laws of human logic? If not, the case breaks down. It is argued<sup>1</sup> that because I cannot think this page to be both white and not white it cannot in fact be so; for in the very saying that although I cannot think it to be so it may be so in fact I am thinking of it as both, which is self-contradictory. But has this argument proved anything at all about the thing itself apart from my thinking about it? It may, indeed, be impossible to consider the thing in itself apart from my thinking about it; but the whole argument for the existence of a reality apart from and contrasted with human appearances rests on the supposition that such a not-thought-of reality does exist. Otherwise, whenever we talk or think about reality, we immediately degrade it to the level of appearance, by making it a part of the experience of a finite human thinking subject. If my thinking can dictate the laws of the behaviour of reality, in what sense can this reality be said to be independent of human experiencing, or different from the appearance in the midst of which we live and from which this theory is trying to rescue us?

Further, what can this reality, to which experience, as appearance, is contrasted, be? Even the most fortunate rationalist does not and cannot know anything about anything which is not matter of experience; and the only way in which anything, appearance or reality, can be known, is by experiencing it; yet to experience it, in any finite human way, is to make it at once appearance. All human experiences are, in some way, transcended in the absolute reality, their inconsistencies purged away and their contradictions removed. It is not, however, the case that all human experience is thrown away as so much useless and dangerous illusion: it is all included in the

<sup>1</sup> Joseph, 'Introduction to Logic', p. 13.

absolute, for reality itself must be experience of some kind. And, after all, human experiences are the only fragments or echoes of reality that we are capable of knowing and experiencing. But we ask in vain what this real experience can be. To talk of it at all should make it appearance, and if that were fully recognized we should have to accept the fact that all our experience was illusion compared with some unknowable but totally real experience of some other kind. The absolutist, trying to find a place for the only evidence he can possibly have, although it is, on his own terms, misleading and fallacious, assures us that our experiences, transmuted into a celestial body and no longer merely ours, go to make up the reality which deposes them from their place and makes of them a spurious and deceptive appearance. And this reality will, throughout, behave in accordance with laws invented to describe how this human thinking which is so disparaged does itself behave.

### iii. *Appearance and Reality*

At all events, the point of the distinction is that appearance is self-contradictory, while reality is a systematic and self-consistent whole. Any appearance, if considered by itself and mistaken for reality, will lead to contradictory and irrational results : only in reality can we find a system perfectly self-contained, harmonious and rational. This reality, which we cannot think about without putting it into the position of object for our thought and thereby limiting it to something less than absoluteness, is unknowable. But are we not a little tired of things which by their very nature are unknowable ? If material things are of that kind, and the real absolute experience is in that respect at least similar, is not the one a night in which all cows are black, no less than the other is a stupid senseless somewhat ? Is there any wonder that the world is a little impatient of metaphysics if its only answer to the world's questions is

the construction of a wholly unknowable fiction, which is then alleged to be the only reality? We may be forgiven for being content, for the present, to wander in less Elysian but more nourishing fields. It is better to do what we can with what we have got than wilfully to throw away the only clue we can have to the answer we are trying to find.

If we start from an ordinary instance of the subject-object relation, for instance in sense-perception, how far can we progress? The subject is the predominant partner. If seven moons appear to me instead of the one which I should expect and which my friend sees, if the whole world appears yellow instead of multi-coloured, if a primrose appears to me and to Peter Bell as a simple primrose and not as a piece of colour or a piece of food, it is because I am intoxicated, I have jaundice, we are simple, unlearned people and not artists or cows. The fault is mine and not the moon's, the world's or the primrose's. Appearances appear as they appear: but there are many and obvious cases in which they appear differently from other appearances which would normally be said to be appearances of the same object. And when this occurs the fault is mine. I can bring it about that there will be different appearances if I like, although all the other factors in the appearance except myself remain unchanged, as we say. I cannot, of course, prove that they are unchanged, because I can never see them except as I see them, that is, as different.

It seems to be possible for me to *notice* things, as distinct from seeing them. I may walk past a particular lamentable architectural feature of Oxford for months without noticing it: one day it is mentioned in conversation, and the next time I pass that way I do notice it. If there is any truth in the view that I am a passive recipient of sense-impressions, what was the difference between the appearance before I was told of it and afterwards? Further, there is the case of the man who

sees pink rats. The rats are held, commonly, to be not real but illusory, because nobody sees them except the sufferer. But he has that appearance, he behaves as if he had it, and the assurance of others that it is not there cannot affect his appearance, any more than the assurances of my sober friend that he sees only one moon can prevent my moon-appearance from being sevenfold. The second time I visited my friend's room, in our old example, I *saw*, without pondering or reflection, a blue banana, although the first time I went to see him I only saw what later was made, by my discursive thinking about it, into something both blue and a banana. What happened between my two visits to produce a different appearance the second time?

It may be that there is no dichotomy within the act of perception, that I do not passively receive a stream of sense-data, which I then think about and form into a judgment of perception. The difficulties of an unsynthesized manifold which not only is capable of synthesis but demands it are too great: to bridge the gulf between sense and understanding is only possible by means of some *ad hoc* invention like the imagination, which explains nothing. How could I ever, as I am said to, correct sense-impressions? I am said to see railway-lines as converging; I have, it is said, a convergent sense-datum, but I am able, by experience, to correct the sense-datum and assert that although the railway-lines *look* convergent I know they are not. But how, if my experience is made up of similar sense-impressions, can I correct this particular sense-impression from it? How can there be any unified experience at all? And, if I have got it, what use is it if I am going to go through the same erroneous processes every time I have a sense-impression? Why should I waste my time and energy in always *seeing* railway-lines as converging and in then correcting the false sense-impressions, if I *know* all the time that the railway-lines are really parallel?

It may be that I am not a passive recipient of sense-impressions : I do not wait and let sense-impressions come in through my eyes ; I look out through my eyes. The 'I' which looks out is an I which has had experience, and when it has had experience of a thing once its attitude to it a second time will be different, whether the cause is jaundice, intoxication, or increased knowledge. Even to know that the banana was a banana I had to have had experience ; to know it the second time for a blue banana would have been impossible without that first experience. But there seems to be no doubt that I do, the second time, *perceive* a blue banana. That is to say, if the phrase be preferred, that the object has not changed but the subject has. It is difficult to be more explicit without metaphor, and the metaphor may be dangerous ; but it may perhaps be said that I, in my contribution to the act of perceiving, pour into that joint act the meaning which the appearance has. That, of course implies that each percipient pours into each act his own meaning, which is exactly what we have formerly affirmed in the different appearances of the primrose, as they are called, to me, the botanist, the artist and the cow. And if we are asked what is the real primrose, as distinct from these appearances, the answer must by now be fairly clear, that there is no real primrose distinct from the appearances, but for each percipient his appearance is the real primrose. It is difficult to see how this conclusion can be avoided.

The first objection will be that while this appearance may be real for me, it does not follow that it is really real. The pink rats are presumably real enough to the man who sees them, but that, while it may call into existence a family, in this case small, of sense-data, does not call into existence a family of real rats. The rats may be real for the dipsomaniac, but they are not therefore really real. Again we must ask the old question, How do you know ? How can you know ? It seems

to be simply a case of his word against mine, there are two different appearances ; which of them is an appearance of the real ? He says his, I say mine : which is right ? We are not fair to the dreamer of dreams or the seer of visions if we bluntly contradict him. His appearance is as real for him as mine is for me, I cannot have his appearances, he cannot have mine, how can anybody possibly judge between them ? What is real for me is the only reality I can have. I cannot know anything about a reality which is not real for me : and if I do know anything about a reality it becomes real for me. It is not the real-for-me which must be tested by the not-only-for-me reality, but the latter by the former. And the real for me, than which there can be nothing more real, is my appearances. So the only reality there is is appearances, and the antithesis between appearance and reality collapses, since the terms are seen to be synonymous.

The second objection, perhaps, will be that so far we have entirely neglected mind. We have talked of sense-perception, and decided that the only reality is appearance, but what of the reality of thought, which is independent of the senses and attainable only by the non-sensuous activity of thinking ? How can we treat, on this basis, the truths of logic or the discursive thought of metaphysics ? Is there not a reality which if not mind-dependent is at least mental and not sensuous ? The answer, again, must be fairly obvious. There is no difference, in this respect, between mental appearance and sensuous appearance. A thought of mine is not a thought unless it appears, not, of course, to my senses, but to my mind. I cannot have sense-appearance without sense-organs : equally I cannot have mental appearance without mental organs, a mind to think the mental appearance in the same way as the senses perceive the sensuous appearance. And in exactly the same way as with the senses, the only mental reality I can know

is the mental appearance which I perceive mentally, that is, which I think. Into sensuous appearance I pour meaning, and with mental appearance it is exactly the same. My thoughts, about virtue, or infinity, or God, are the only reality I can know about virtue, or infinity, or God. If I knew more about them I should know more about them.

And so it seems, in the end, that both perception and thinking are concerned with appearance. It cannot be otherwise, for if it were there would always be a difficulty like that of Representative Perception in the one sphere or like that which is involved in any reference-theory of judgment on the other. And in our consideration of perception, judgment and inference we have found it very difficult to draw a line and say that the one begins or the other ends here or here. There is a process, and it is concerned with appearance. Appearance is the prime fact, an appearance to which the percipient contributes a great deal, enough, at least, to make totally different appearances which ought, on the supposition that the appearance is given by something, to be similar. We may affirm the same of mental appearances. That is to say that when I think, what appears mentally to me, when I am told to think of virtue, for instance, or God, is quite unlike what appears to my neighbour when he is told to think of what should be the same thing. But all appearances, whether of primroses, pink rats, infinity, or God, are real : real appearances, if you like, but that is an unnecessary tautology. For all appearances are real, and the only reality is appearance.

*Consult further :*

Berkeley. ‘An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision.’

F. H. Bradley. ‘Appearance and Reality.’

B. Russell. ‘Our Knowledge of the External World’, esp.  
chaps. III and IV

## CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our attempt to provide an introduction to philosophy. We have not attempted, and still do not propose to attempt, a formal definition or a complete answer to the question, What is philosophy? We can only point backwards over the preceding pages and say that philosophizing is talking about that sort of thing in that sort of way, admitting, fully and gladly, that it also includes a great many enquiries we have not entered upon and a great many problems we have quietly ignored. We have strayed over a field of human discussion without system and without formalism, starting hares, pursuing them for a time, and leaving them, all too often, uncaptured.

We began by framing to ourselves a twofold conception of philosophy, as critical and as constructive; to make philosophy's position as a critic of science safe we must find a basis, different in kind from the hypotheses of the scientist, a single unhypothetical fact. This we found in our consciousness, our awareness of mind, or the subject-object relation. And from there we were led on, through a discussion of the nature of this object, to causality and change; through them to purpose and moral action; and through them to judgment, truth, and the final problem of metaphysics; drifting, apparently, without aim or method, content to be carried along by the current of the stream on whose bosom we had launched ourselves.

But we plead an exemplar no less august than Socrates himself for our practice of wandering whither the argument leads, permitting ourselves to be guided by it

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through changing landscapes under changing skies. We can only hope that our journeyings have brought us a little nearer than we were before we started to our longed-for goal, that city of the mind where Beauty, Truth and Goodness are known for what they are.

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